

Virata Parva

The Pandavas have to spend the thirteenth year in disguise and in hiding. They decide to do this in the kingdom of Virata and this parva is named after that. In the 18-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Virata Parva is fourth. This parva has sixty-seven chapters. In the 100-parva classification of the Mahabharata, Sections 45 through 48 constitute Virata Parva. In the numbering of the chapters in this parva, the first number is a consecutive one, starting with the beginning of the Mahabharata. And the second number, within brackets, is the numbering of the chapter within Virata Parva.

Section Forty-Five

Vairata Parva

This section has 282 shlokas and twelve chapters.

*Chapter 597(1): 23 shlokas
Chapter 598(2): 27 shlokas
Chapter 599(3): 19 shlokas
Chapter 600(4): 49 shlokas
Chapter 601(5): 31 shlokas
Chapter 602(6): 16 shlokas
Chapter 603(7): 11 shlokas
Chapter 604(8): 33 shlokas
Chapter 605(9): 15 shlokas
Chapter 606(10): 13 shlokas
Chapter 607(11): 13 shlokas
Chapter 608(12): 32 shlokas*

This section is named after Virata. Virata is the proper name, whereas Vairata is the adjective. In Section 44 (Volume 3), at the end of Aranyaka (Vana) Parva, a brahmana's kindling was robbed by a deer and the Pandavas pursued the deer. This section takes off from there. The Pandavas decide to spend the thirteenth year in disguise in King Virata's kingdom. In individual disguises, the Pandavas and Droupadi arrive in King Virata's court and are accepted by him. Yudhishtira becomes Kanka, Bhima becomes Ballava, Arjuna becomes Brihannada, Nakula becomes Granthika, Sahadeva becomes Tantipala and Droupadi becomes Sairandhri.

597(1)

Janamejaya asked, 'Oppressed by fear of Duryodhana, how did my great grandfathers live in disguise in the city of Virata?'¹

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having obtained boons from Dharma in that fashion,² the one who was foremost among upholders of dharma³ returned to the hermitage and told the brahmanas everything that had happened. Having recounted everything to the brahmanas, Yudhishtira returned the kindling to the brahmana.⁴ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then Dharma’s son, the great-minded King Yudhishtira, called all his younger brothers and spoke to them in this way. “Dislodged from our kingdom, we have lived for twelve years and the thirteenth has arrived now. We will have to live through a difficult period. O Kounteya Arjuna! Therefore, think of a desirable place where all of us may dwell, without being detected by our enemies.” Arjuna replied, “O lord of men! O bull among the Bharata lineage! Because of the boon that has been given to us by Dharma, we can roam undetected by men. I will recount the kingdoms where we may dwell. Some of them are beautiful and secluded. Which of these seems attractive to you? Around the kingdom of the Kurus, there are many beautiful countries with an abundance of food—Panchala, Chedi, Matsya, Shurasena, Patachchara, Dasharna, Navarashtra, Malla, Shalva and Yugandhara. O king! Which among these seems to you to be an attractive place to live in? O Indra among kings! Where will we dwell for a year?” Yudhishtira said, “O mighty-armed one! It will indeed be as the illustrious lord of all beings⁵ has said. It cannot be otherwise. We must certainly dwell in a place that is beautiful, auspicious and pleasant, where all of us can live without any fear. Let us consult among ourselves. The powerful Matsya Virata will protect the Pandavas. He is aged, generous, with a great deal of riches and conducts himself in accordance with dharma. O son!⁶ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Let us happily spend a year in the city of Virata.⁷ We will perform tasks for him there.⁸ O descendants of the Kuru lineage! Let each one of us describe the tasks that he will perform, the kind of duties that we will undertake for him.” Arjuna replied, “O god among men! O virtuous one! What duty will you undertake in the kingdom of King Virata? What appeals to you? You are gentle, generous, modest and devoted to dharma. Truth is your valour. O king! O Pandava! Confronted by this calamity, what will you do? O king!

You are not familiar with the hardships faced by ordinary people. How will you pass through this calamity that has come over you?” Yudhishtira said, “O descendants of the Kuru lineage! Listen to the duties that I will undertake. When I arrive before King Virata, bull among men, I will become a member of that great-souled king’s assembly. I will pose as a brahmana named Kanka, skilled in dice and fond of gambling.⁹ I will use beautiful dice made out of lapis lazuli, gold, ivory and lustrous fruit,¹⁰ with black and red dots. If asked, I will tell the king that in earlier times I used to be Yudhishtira’s friend, as dear to him as life itself. I have now told you how I wish to spend my time. O Vrikodara!¹¹ What task will you perform in Virata?”

598(2)

‘Bhima said, “I think I will present myself before King Virata as a superintendent of the kitchen and give my name as Ballava. Since I possess culinary skills, I will cook him dishes. I will surpass all the skilled chefs who have cooked dishes for him earlier and thus generate affection in his mind. I will fetch large loads of wood for him. The king will be pleased on witnessing my great deeds. O king! If there are powerful elephants, or immensely strong bulls, that need to be overpowered by me, I will pacify them too. If there are warriors who need to be fought in the assembly, I will vanquish them also and increase his affection towards me. But I will never slay any of those fighters. I will bring them down so that they do not perish. If asked, I will say that I was cook, cattle-tender, chef and wrestler to Yudhishtira. O lord of the earth! I will act so as to protect myself on my own. I promise that I will carry myself in this way.”

‘Yudhishtira said, “He is foremost among men. In a desire to burn down Khandava, he was the one before whom Agni appeared in the disguise of a brahmana in earlier times. He was accompanied by Dasharha then.¹² He is immensely strong and mighty-armed. He is the invincible descendant of the Kuru lineage. What duty will Kounteya Dhananjaya undertake? He confronted the conflagration and satisfied the fire.

Ascended on a single chariot, he vanquished Indra and killed the serpents and the *rakshasas*. He is supreme among warriors. What will Arjuna do? The sun is foremost among those that heat. The brahmana is supreme among bipeds, a poisonous one among snakes. Agni is supreme among those with energy. The *vajra* is supreme among weapons. A bull with a hump is supreme among cattle. The ocean is foremost among stores of water. Parjanya¹³ is supreme among those who shower down. Dhritarashtra is supreme among *nagas* and Airavata¹⁴ among elephants. The son is supreme among those who are loved and the wife among well-wishers. O Vrikodara! Just as there is a foremost among each specific category, this young Gudakesha¹⁵ is foremost among all archers. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He is not inferior to Indra or Vasudeva. He is the wielder of the bow Gandiva and has white horses. What will Bibhatsu do?¹⁶ He lived for five years in the abode of the one with a thousand eyes.¹⁷ In a form that was as radiant as that of the gods, he obtained divine weapons. I think that he is the twelfth Rudra and the thirteenth Aditya.¹⁸ His arms are smooth and long. His skin is tough, both on the right and the left,¹⁹ from drawing the string of the bow and marked like bulls that bear loads. The armed Arjuna is supreme, like Himalaya among the mountains, the ocean among stores of water, Shakra²⁰ among the thirty gods, Agni among the Vasus, the tiger among animals and Garuda among winged ones. What will he do?”

‘Arjuna replied, “O lord of the earth! I promise that I will undertake the duties of a eunuch. O king! It is difficult to conceal these great marks that the string of the bow has left. I will wear earrings as radiant as the fire on my ears. O king! I will wear a braid on my head and name myself Brihannada.²¹ I will repeatedly recount stories and observe the characteristics of a woman. I will please the king and the others who live in the inner quarters through different forms of singing and dancing and the playing of varied kinds of music.²² O king! I will teach the women in Virata’s abode these arts. I will recount the many deeds, fruits and conducts of people. O Kounteya! I will disguise myself in this way. O

descendant of the Bharata lineage! If I am asked by the king, I will say that I was Droupadi's attendant in Yudhishtira's house. O Indra among kings! In this way, I will pleasantly spend my time in Virata's abode, disguising myself through deceit, just as Nala had done.”²³

599(3)

‘Yudhishtira asked, “O Nakula! O son!²⁴ You are delicate, brave, handsome and used to pleasure. What will you do and how will you act?”

‘Nakula replied, “I will become a keeper of horses for King Virata. I find pleasure in that kind of work and will give myself the name of Granthika. I am skilled in training horses and also in treating horses. O king of the Kuru lineage! I have always loved horses, just as much as you have. If people in the city of Virata question me, I will tell them that this is how I find pleasure.”

‘Yudhishtira asked, “O Sahadeva! How will you find pleasure before him?²⁵ O son!²⁶ What task will you undertake? How will you disguise yourself while roaming there?”

‘Sahadeva replied, “I will tend to the cows of King Virata. I am skilled in tending to cattle, milking them and counting them. Know that I will be called by the name of Tantipala. I will conduct myself skilfully and do not be anxious on my account. In earlier times, you have naturally used me for tending to cattle. O lord of the earth! I am acquainted with all the skills connected with that task, the traits and conduct of cattle and the auspicious marks. O lord of the earth! I know all this and other things extremely well. O king! I know which bulls possess marks that deserve worship, and the smell of whose urine makes barren cows give birth. I will conduct myself in this way, for this always brings pleasure to me. O king! No one will be able to recognize me and you will be happy.”

‘Yudhishtira said, “This is our beloved wife, dearer to us than our lives. She should be protected like a mother and worshipped like an elder sister. What duty will Krishna Droupadi perform and how will she conduct herself? She is not familiar with any of the duties and tasks that women

perform. She is delicate and young and is a famous princess. She is immensely fortunate and devoted to her husbands. How will she conduct herself? Ever since birth, this beautiful one has known garlands, fragrances, ornaments and varied garments.”

‘Droupadi replied, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In this world, there are unprotected maidservants known as *sairandhri*.²⁷ It is known to people that no other women conduct themselves in this fashion. If asked, I will call myself Sairandhri, adept at dressing the hair. Concealing myself in this way, I will enter the service of Sudeshna, the king’s famous wife. On obtaining me, she will protect me. Do not be unhappy in this way.”

‘Yudhishtira said, “O Krishna! You speak well, deserving of one who has been born in a noble lineage. You do not know any sin. You are virtuous and always base yourself on righteous vows.””

600(4)

‘Yudhishtira said, “You have stated the tasks and the duties that you will perform. To the best of my intelligence, I have decided that I approve of this. Let our priest leave, together with the superintendents of the kitchen and the cooks, and preserve the *agnihotra*²⁸ in Drupada’s abode. It is my view that Indrasena²⁹ and the other charioteers should take the empty chariots and swiftly proceed to Dvaravati. Let all the women who tend to Droupadi go to Panchala³⁰ with the superintendents of the kitchen and the cooks. All of them must say, ‘We do not know where the Pandavas are. All of them have deserted us and have left Dvaitavana.’”

‘Dhousmya³¹ said, “Devoted well-wishers can speak about things that are known. Therefore, I will speak and listen to my reasons. O princes! I will tell you about life in a king’s abode and about how, having reached the king’s household, you can free yourselves from harm. O Kouravyas! Life in a king’s abode is difficult, even for those who are acquainted with it. For an entire year you will be unknown and will not be shown any honour, even though you deserve honour. When you are shown the door, take to the door. Do not repose any trust in kings. Seek out seats that no one else

desires. Live in the king's abode without assuming that, as a favourite, one can ascend his vehicle, palanquin, seat, elephant or chariot. If evil-minded ones are suspicious of the seat that you occupy, do not ascend there again. That is the way one can live in a king's residence. One should never offer advice to the king, unless he has asked for it. Be seated in silence and honour him at the right time. Kings dislike those who disagree and people who speak lies. Wise ones never become friendly with the wives,³² or with those who live in the inner quarters, or ill-wishers whom the king despises. With the king's knowledge, one should perform the most insignificant of tasks. If one conducts oneself in this fashion, one will be protected from any harm from the king. One should serve with the care one exhibits towards Agni or the other gods. There is no doubt that if one resorts to falsehood, one will confront violence. One should follow the instructions of the lord and avoid negligence, pride and anger. One should always offer advice that is good and pleasant, but one should attend more to the good than the pleasant. In every kind of conversation, one should be kindly disposed.³³ One should never say that which is unpleasant and brings no gain. A learned one serves, not thinking that he is favoured. Without any confusion, do that which is good and pleasant. One can live in the king's abode as long as one does not serve those who wish him ill, as long as one does not consort with those who seek to harm him and as long as one does not stray from one's station. The learned seat themselves to the right side or the left. It has been decreed that the place behind him is for armed guards. The grand seat in front of him has always been forbidden. One should not talk about prosperity in his presence.³⁴ This is regarded as extreme impertinence, even among the poor. Do not reveal to men the lies the king utters. Do not converse with men the king does not like. Do not be proud because of your bravery, or vain because of your intelligence. One becomes dear and comfortable by doing that which brings pleasure to the king. Having obtained rare riches and affection from a king, without any confusion, one must engage in that which is good and pleasant for the king. His anger can be a great obstacle. His favours can bring great fruits. Can anyone, who is honoured by the wise, think of causing harm to such a

person? One should not forcefully move one's lips or thighs, or utter words with great force. Sneezing, breaking wind and clearing the throat should always be done gently. When there is an occasion for laughter, one should laugh gently, and not like one who is mad. But one should not be too solemn. Otherwise, one will be taken to be too severe. Instead, one should smile gently, showing oneself to be benevolent. One can always live in a king's abode if one does not show delight at a gain or sorrow at a dishonour, and is always attentive. If one is a learned counsellor who always pleases the king and the prince, one can always live there in prosperity. If a beloved adviser has fallen out of favour for some reason and does not blame the king, he will regain the favours once more. One who earns his livelihood from the king, or dwells in his kingdom, must be sagacious enough to recount his good qualities, both in his presence and in his absence. An adviser who strongly desires to obtain some objective from the king, will not remain in that position for long and faces a danger to his life. For the sake of what is seen to be one's one gains, one should not say anything that goes against the king. In particular, one should always advice the king at the right place. One who is always cheerful, strong, brave, faithful like a shadow, truthful, gentle and self-controlled, is capable of dwelling in a king's abode. If another one is instructed with a task, a person who jumps forward and asks what he should do is capable of dwelling in a king's abode. If one does not waver when given instructions, whether it is hot or cold, or night or day, one is capable of dwelling in a king's abode. One who lives away from home and does not remember one's loved ones and one who finds happiness in unhappiness is capable of dwelling in a king's abode. One should not dress like him.³⁵ One should not laugh loudly in his presence. One should not offer a great deal of advice. In this way, one will become dear to the king. Appointed to a task, one should not touch riches.³⁶ Having obtained unearned riches, one faces imprisonment or death. One should use vehicles, garments, ornaments and other objects that have been given, and thus become a greater favourite. O sons!³⁷ Spend a year in this way, adorning yourselves with good conduct.

You will then regain your possessions and act according to your pleasures.”

‘Yudhishtira replied, “O fortunate one! We have been instructed by you. No one but you can speak in this fashion, but for our mother Kunti and the immensely intelligent Vidura. It is now necessary to do what must be done, so that we can overcome our suffering and depart so as to achieve victory.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus addressed by the king, Dhoumya, supreme among brahmanas, performed all the decreed rites that were necessary for their departure. He offered kindling to the fire and rendered oblations to the utterance of mantras, so that their prosperity might increase and they might conquer the earth. The six of them, with Yajnaseni³⁸ at the forefront, circumambulated the fire and the brahmanas, rich in austerities. Then they departed.’

601(5)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Those brave ones girded their swords and were armed with other weapons. Their quivers were tied. They had guards on their fingers and wrists. They proceeded towards the river Kalindi.³⁹ On foot, they arrived at its southern bank. The archers lived there, finding fortifications in the mountains and the forests. The immensely strong great archers shot many different kinds of deer. To the north of Dasharna and the south of Panchala, the Pandavas passed through Yakrilloma and Shurasena. Attired as hunters, they entered Matsya from the direction of the forest. Having reached that country, Krishna told the king, “Behold. Many footpaths and different kinds of fields can be seen here. It is clear that Virata’s capital is still far away. My fatigue is extremely great. Let us spend the night here.” Yudhishtira replied, “O Dhananjaya! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Lift Panchali and carry her. Once we free ourselves from this forest, we will settle down in the capital.” Like a king of elephants, Arjuna swiftly raised Droupadi up. Arjuna put her down when they reached the outskirts of the capital. On arriving at the capital,

Kounteya⁴⁰ asked Arjuna, “Before entering the city, where will we keep our weapons? O son!⁴¹ If we enter the city with our weapons, there is no doubt that we will create anxiety among the people. We have made a promise that even if one of us happens to be discovered, we will have to return to the forest again for twelve years.” Arjuna said, “O Indra among men! On this peak and close to the cremation ground, there is a gigantic *shami* tree.⁴² It is impenetrable because of its fearsome branches and is difficult to climb. O king! Not a single man can be seen here. It is far away from the road and has grown in a forest frequented by animals and predators. Let us hang up our weapons there and then proceed towards the city. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We will then be able to enjoy ourselves as we please.” O bull among the Bharata lineage! Having thus addressed King Dharmaraja Yudhishtira, he took off his weapons there.

‘Partha, descendant of the Kuru lineage, loosened the string of the terrible Gandiva, which made a great roar and slaughtered masses of enemies. With it, alone on a chariot, he had vanquished gods, men and snakes and conquered many opulent countries. Yudhishtira, the brave scorcher of enemies, loosened the bow’s undecaying string, one with which he had protected Kurukshetra.⁴³ Lord Bhimasena loosened the string of the bow with which he had defeated the Panchalas in battle and with which, he alone, had conquered many enemies in the course of his conquest. Enemies were pacified in battle because of the twang of that bow. Mountains were rent asunder with the twang of Bhimasena’s bow, which was like that of thunder. O unblemished one! He had used it to oppress the king of Saindhava.⁴⁴ The brave Pandava who had roared in battle, loosened the string of the bow with which he had conquered the west.⁴⁵ The brave lord Sahadeva, whose conduct was honest,⁴⁶ loosened the string of the weapon with which he had conquered the southern direction. With the bows, they laid down their long and yellow swords, their extremely expensive quivers and arrows that were as sharp as razors. Having himself climbed the tree, Nakula deposited these bows. He tied them firmly with strong nooses to those branches that were extremely strong and wide and where he saw that showers of rain would not enter.

The Pandavas also tied a dead body there, so that people would smell the stench of a corpse and avoid the shami tree from a distance. While they were tying the corpse to the tree, the scorchers of enemies were questioned by cowherds and herdsmen. They said, “This is our mother, who is one hundred and eighty years old. This is the dharma of our lineage, one that has been followed by our ancestors.” Then the Parthas, the destroyers of enemies, approached the city.

‘Yudhishtira gave them the names they would secretly address each other by—Jaya, Jayanta, Vijaya, Jayatsena and Jayadbala. In accordance with the promise that they had made, they entered the great city, to live in disguise in that kingdom for the thirteenth year.’

602(6)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On his way to King Virata, who was seated in his assembly hall, Yudhishtira first fastened the dice, made of lapis lazuli and gold, to his side and gathered his garments around him. The immensely famous lord of men, extender of the Kourava lineage, went to the extremely generous lord of the kingdom.⁴⁷ He was worshipped by kings among men and was as difficult to approach as a venomous serpent.⁴⁸ He was a bull among men in his strength and beauty. He was grand and radiant, like an immortal. He was like the sun, enveloped in a great mass of clouds. The brave one was like the fire, covered in ashes. The Pandava approached, like the moon shrouded in clouds. On seeing this, King Virata questioned the advisers, brahmanas and vaishyas who were seated there. “Who is the one who has approached me, setting his eyes on my assembly hall for the first time? This supreme among men cannot be a brahmana. It seems to me that he must be a lord of the earth, though he doesn’t possess a servant, a chariot or an earring. When he nears, he is as resplendent as Indra. It is my view that the marks on his body indicate that he is one whose head has been anointed.⁴⁹ He approaches me without any hesitation, the way a rutting elephant nears a pond full of lotuses.” While he was thus reflecting, Yudhishtira, bull

among men, approached Virata and spoke to him. “O emperor! Know that I am a brahmana who has lost everything and has come here in search of a livelihood. O unblemished one! O lord! I wish to live here with you, following your instructions.” On hearing this, the king happily welcomed him.

‘Thereafter, he spoke to him.⁵⁰ “Please accept our homage. O son!⁵¹ I am welcoming you with delight. Now tell me. From which king’s dominion have you arrived here? Tell me truthfully, your name and your lineage. Which is the art that you wish to pursue here?” Yudhishtira replied, “In earlier times, I used to be Yudhishtira’s friend. I am a brahmana from Vyaghrapada’s lineage. I am skilled at throwing the dice and gambling. O Virata! I am known by the name of Kanka.” Virata said, “I grant you the boon that you desire. Rule over Matsya and I will serve you. I have always loved skilled and shrewd gamblers. You are like a god and deserve a kingdom.” Yudhishtira replied, “O lord of the earth! O Matsya! If there is ever a great dispute, I will never accept the views of anyone who is inferior. But no one whom I defeat will retain his riches. Through your favours, please grant me this boon.” Virata said, “If anything unpleasant is done towards you, I will kill even those who should not be killed. If it is a brahmana, I will exile him from my kingdom.⁵² Let all the assembled citizens hear that Kanka is as much a lord of the kingdom as I am. You will be my friend and ride on the same vehicle. You will have many garments and a lot of food and drink. You will always look towards my inner and outer affairs. My door will always be open for you. When oppressed people approach you in search of work, you can always give them word on my behalf. There is no doubt that I will give them everything that has been promised. In my presence, you will not find anything to be scared of.” Having thus met King Virata and obtained the boon from him, the brave bull among men began to dwell there happily. He was shown the ultimate honours. No one there got to know about his true intentions.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘After that, another one arrived. He was terrible in strength and his beauty was resplendent. His gait was as easy as that of a valorous lion. He held a spoon and a ladle in his hands. He also had an unsheathed black and iron sword that was devoid of any blemishes. He was in the form of a cook, but his radiance was supreme. He was like the sun illuminating the world. He was attired in extremely dark garments and was like the king of the mountains.⁵³ He approached the king of Matsya and stood there. On seeing the supreme one arrive, the king spoke to the assembled citizens. “Who is this handsome and young one whom we see? He is like a bull among men. His shoulders are as large as that of a lion. I have not seen a man like him before. He is like the sun. Though I have been reflecting, I am unable to determine correctly the intentions of this bull among men.” Pandava then approached Virata. The great-minded one spoke in words that seemed to be despondent. “O Indra among men! I am a cook named Ballava. Appoint me and I will cook you supreme dishes.” Virata replied, “You are one who offers honour. I do not believe that you are a cook. You seem to be the equal of the thousand-eyed one,⁵⁴ in your radiance, your beauty and your valour. O son!⁵⁵ You are radiant and supreme among men.” Bhima said, “O Indra among men! I am a cook and your servant. I only know the best of dishes. O king! In earlier times, King Yudhishtira used to taste all of them. There is no one who is equal to me in strength. O king! I have always been skilled at wrestling. O unblemished one! I will bring you pleasure by fighting with elephants and lions.” Virata replied, “I grant you the boon that you will be employed in the kitchen. You will work there, since you have said that you possess those skills. However, I do not think that this work is appropriate for you. You deserve the entire earth, girded by the ocean. But let it be the way you desire. You will be appointed the chief chef in the kitchen, heading the men who have been appointed there earlier by me.” Thus Bhima was instated in the kitchen. He became a great favourite of King Virata’s. O king! While he lived there, no one, not even the servants, got to know who he was.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then the unblemished Krishna braided her hair, with curls at the tips. The mild and dark-eyed one hid it on the right side and donned a garment that was long, dark and extremely dirty. She thus assumed the garb of a sairandhri and began to roam around, as if she was in great trouble. On seeing her wandering around, men and women rushed to her and asked, “Who are you and what do you desire?” O Indra among kings! She then told them, “I am a sairandhri. I have come here, wishing to work for anyone who will feed me.” On seeing her beauty, her attire and the gentleness of her speech, they did not believe that she was a maidservant who had come in search of food.

‘Virata’s wife was the daughter of Kekaya and was greatly honoured. She looked down from the palace and beheld Drupada’s daughter. On seeing her in that state, without a protector and clad in a single piece of garment, she summoned her and said, “O fortunate one! Who are you and what do you wish to do?” O Indra among kings! She told her,⁵⁶ “I am a sairandhri and I have arrived here in search of work. I will work for anyone who feeds me.” Sudeshna⁵⁷ replied, “O beautiful one! Those you speak of⁵⁸ do not possess the beauty you have. Those like you have many and varied servant maids and servants. Your ankles are concealed. Your thighs are firm. You are deep in three places⁵⁹ and high in six.⁶⁰ You are red in the five places that should be red.⁶¹ Your voice is as slow as that of a swan. You have beautiful hair and beautiful breasts. You are dark.⁶² Your buttocks and breasts are full. You are endowed with all the qualities, like a mare from Kashmira. Your eyelashes curl gracefully. Your lips are like *bimbas*.⁶³ You are slender at the waist. Your neck is lined like a conch shell. Your veins are hidden. Your face is like the full moon. O fortunate one! Tell me truthfully who you are. You cannot be a servant maid. Are you a *yakshi*, a goddess, a *gandharvi* or an *apsara*⁶⁴—Alambusha, Mishrakeshi, Pundarika, Malini, Indrani, Varuni, or the consort of Tvashtra, Dhata or Prajapati?⁶⁵ These goddesses are famous among the gods. Which of these are you?”

‘Droupadi replied, “I am not a goddess, or a gandharvi, or an *asuri*, or a *rakshasi*. I tell you truthfully that I am a *sairandhri*. I know how to dress hair and am skilful at grinding unguents. I can weave extremely beautiful and colourful garlands. I served Satyabhama, Krishna’s beloved queen and Krishna,⁶⁶ the wife of the Pandus and the solitary beauty in the Kuru lineage. I go wherever I can obtain a good life. I am happy as long as I can obtain excellent garments. The goddess herself used to call me by the name of Malini.⁶⁷ O goddess! O Sudeshna! I have arrived thus in your house.”

‘Sudeshna said, “There is no doubt that I can place you on my head, as long as the king does not desire you with all his heart and go to you. Behold! The ladies of the royal lineage and those who live in my abode are gazing at you with attachment. What man will you not infatuate? Behold! Even the trees that are established in my abode are bending down over you. What man will you not infatuate? When King Virata sees your superhuman beauty, with the beautiful buttocks and the beautiful hips, he will forsake me and go to you with all his heart. Your limbs are flawless. Your eyes are soft and long. O one with the beautiful smiles! On looking at you, any man who sees you will become attached and be overcome with desire. You are unblemished in all your limbs and he will come under the sway of the god of love. A she-crab conceives and brings about her own death.⁶⁸ O one with the beautiful smiles! I think that if I grant you residence, I will bring about my own destruction.”

‘Droupadi replied, “O beautiful one! Neither Virata, nor anyone else, can ever obtain me. I have five young gandharvas⁶⁹ as my husbands. They are the sons of a gandharva king who is extremely powerful. They always protect me. Any conduct that brings me grief ensures destruction. My gandharva husbands allow me to live in a house where I am not served any leftover food and where I am not asked to wash anyone’s feet. If any man desires me, like any other common woman, before the night is over, he will enter another body.⁷⁰ O beautiful one! No one is capable of making me stray. Those powerful gandharvas always protect me from unhappiness.”

‘Sudeshna said, “O beloved one! I will then offer you residence, according to your desires. You will not wash the feet of others. Nor will you ever eat leftover food.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Krishna was thus comforted by Virata’s wife. O Janamejaya! No one there got to know who she actually was.’

605(9)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having donned the supreme garments of a cowherd, Sahadeva also arrived. He adopted their language and presented himself before Virata. The king saw that resplendent bull among men arriving, and advancing towards the descendant of the Kuru lineage, asked him, “Whom do you belong to and where have you come from? O son!⁷¹ What do you wish for? O bull among men! Tell me truthfully. I have not seen you before.” When he arrived before the king, Sahadeva, the destroyer of enemies, spoke in a voice that was as deep as the clouds. “I am a vaishya by the name of Arishtanemi. I used to number the cows for the bulls among the Kurus. O supreme one on earth! I wish to reside with you. I do not know where the Parthas, lions among kings, are. I know of no other means of livelihood. O king! I will not find pleasure in serving anyone other than you.” Virata replied, “You must be a brahmana or a kshatriya. You are as handsome as a lord of the earth, with the frontiers of the ocean. O destroyer of enemies! Tell me the truth. The duties of a vaishya are not appropriate for you. From what king’s kingdom have you arrived here? What kind of craftsmanship do you wish to pursue? In what capacity will you always reside with us? Tell me what salary you wish to be paid.” Sahadeva said, “King Yudhishtira is the eldest among the five sons of Pandu. He possessed herds of eight hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, another ten thousand and another twenty thousand cows. I was the one who numbered his cows and I was known by the name of Tantipala. Nothing is unknown to me about numbering—the past, the present and the future, and within a distance of ten *yojanas*.⁷² The great-souled one, Yudhishtira, king of the Kuru lineage, was well acquainted with my skills and was

always satisfied with me. I know how cattle can be multiplied swiftly and how one ensures that they never suffer from disease. These types of skills have always been known to me. Such craftsmanship has always been established in me. O king! I know the auspicious marks of bulls, the smell of whose urine makes barren cows give birth.” Virata replied, “I possess one hundred thousand. They have been classified according to colours and other qualities that are yet undetected. I put you in charge of the animals and the herdsmen. Henceforth, let my animals be in your care.” O lord of the earth! Thus, unknown to the king, that supreme among men lived there happily. No one else found out who he was. He was also paid a salary, according to his wishes.’

606(10)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then another handsome one made his appearance. He was a giant man, but was adorned in the ornaments of women. He wore earrings that were as large as walls and turrets, made out of long and beautiful conch shells adorned with gold. His long and abundant hair was combed. He was mighty-armed and his valour was like that of an elephant. The earth trembled as he advanced. He approached Virata, who was seated in his assembly hall, an oppressor of enemies who had disguised himself. However, his supreme radiance was dazzling. This was the son of the great Indra, and like a king of elephants in his valour. On seeing him arrive in the assembly hall, the king asked all those who were nearby, “Where has he come from? I have not heard of him before.” But none of the men there said that they knew him. In amazement, the king spoke these words. “You are a beautiful man and have all the endowments. You are dark and young and are equal to the leader of a herd of elephants. You wear beautiful conch shells that are adorned with gold. You have loosened your hair in a braid and are adorned with earrings. Your hair is peaked and abundant. But your attire seems to be wrong. You must be an archer, with armour and arrows. Climb onto a swift vehicle. Be like my sons, or like me myself. I am an old man now and wish to ease my burdens. Swiftly protect the

entire region of Matsya. Someone with your form cannot be a eunuch. It seems to my mind that there is no way this can be true.”

‘Arjuna replied, “I sing, dance and play musical instruments. I am excellent in dancing and skilled in singing. O god among men! Give me Uttara.⁷³ I will myself be the dancer to that goddess. There is no point in recounting how I came by this form. It will only increase my misery. O god among men! Know my name to be Brihannada. I have been abandoned by my father and my mother as a son and a daughter.”⁷⁴

‘Virata said, “O Brihannada! I will grant you the boon that you have asked for. Instruct my daughter, and others like her, in dance. I do not think that such a duty befits you. You deserve the entire earth, up to the frontiers of the ocean.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having tested Brihannada in dancing, music and other arts, and on determining that he was a eunuch, the king of Matsya permitted him to enter the quarters of the princess. Lord Dhananjaya instructed Virata’s daughter in singing and music, as well as her friends and attendants. Pandava became very dear to them. Self-controlled Dhananjaya lived there in disguise and did what pleased them. No one there, outside or in the inner quarters, got to know about him.’

607(11)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then another lordly Pandava was seen to approach King Virata, when he was inspecting his horses. As he arrived, the people saw him, like the disc of the sun freed from behind the clouds. He began to examine the horses that were in every direction. On seeing him engaged in examining, the king of Matsya, the destroyer of enemies, spoke to his attendants thus. “This man is an equal of the immortals. Where has he come from? He is examining my horses with great thoroughness. It is certain that he is skilled in the knowledge of horses. Let him swiftly be brought before me. This brave one’s appearance is like that of an immortal.” The destroyer of enemies⁷⁵ now spoke to the king. “O king! O fortunate one! May you be victorious. O king! I have always been

esteemed because of my knowledge of horses. I will become the skilled charioteer of your horses.” Virata replied, “I will give you vehicles, riches and a house. You deserve to be the charioteer of my horses. But where have you come from and whom do you belong to? Why have you come here? Tell me about the arts that are known to you.”⁷⁶ Nakula said, “King Yudhishtira is the eldest of the five sons of Pandu. O destroyer of enemies! I was earlier employed as the tender of his horses. I know the nature of horses and everything about subduing them. I can control wicked ones and I know everything about healing them. No steed that belongs to me is ever timid. No mare of mine is wicked, not to speak of stallions. People, and Pandava Yudhishtira, knew me by the name of Granthika.” Virata replied, “From today, let all the horses and mounts that I possess be entrusted to your care. Let all my charioteers, and all those who yoke horses, be subordinate to you from now on. O one who is like the gods! Tell me what you wish for. What kind of salary do you desire? The tending of horses does not become you. It seems to me that you are as radiant as a king. To me, your appearance is as pleasant as that of Yudhishtira himself. How can the Pandava⁷⁷ find any pleasure dwelling in the forest, without any servants?” Thus the young one, who was like the best of the gandharvas, was happily honoured by King Virata. No one got to know about him and he roamed around, making himself agreeable. Thus did the Pandavas, whose sight always bore fruit, dwell in Matsya, following the pledge that they had given. They lived a careful life of concealment. But the lords of the earth, up to the frontiers of the ocean, were extremely miserable.’

608(12)

Janamejaya asked, ‘O brahmana! While the Pandavas resided in the city of Matsya, what did the extremely valorous Pandavas do?’

Vaishampayana said, ‘While the descendants of the Kuru lineage lived there in disguise, honoured by the king, listen to what they did. O lord of the earth! As a courtier, Yudhishtira became the beloved of others in the

assembly, as well as of Virata and his son. Pandava knew the heart of the dice and played with the dice as he pleased, as if they were birds tied to a string. Unknown to Virata, Dharmaraja, tiger among men, distributed the riches that he won among his brothers, to each one according to what he deserved. Bhimasena sold Yudhishtira meat and other kinds of food that were given by Matsya. Arjuna sold the old garments that he obtained from the inner quarters and passed on all the proceeds to the Pandavas. Pandava Sahadeva assumed the attire of a cowherd. He gave the Pandavas curds, milk and ghee. Because of his duties with the horses, Nakula satisfied the lord of men⁷⁸ and obtained riches. He gave this to the Pandavas. The ascetic Krishna looked after all the brothers. The beautiful one acted so that they might remain undetected. O lord of men! Thus the *maharathas*⁷⁹ looked after each other, living in disguise, but looking after Krishna.

‘There was a great festival of austerities in Matsya in the fourth month.⁸⁰ Men honoured it and celebrated it with great expense. O king! Thousands of wrestlers arrived there from all the directions. They were gigantic in size and immensely valorous, like Kalakhanja *asuras*.⁸¹ They were insolent of their valour and were proud of their strength and were honoured by the king. Their shoulders, waists and necks were like those of lions. They were free from dirt and were in great spirits. Before the king, they had been victorious and honoured in the arena earlier. There was a gigantic one among them and he challenged all the wrestlers. As he strode around the arena, not a single one dared to take him on. When all the other wrestlers were despondent and had lost their spirits, the king of Matsya asked his cook to fight with the wrestler. Thus instructed, Bhima was unable to refuse the king in public and unhappily made up his mind.⁸² That tiger among men entered the giant arena with the light gait of a tiger and brought delight to Virata. To the delight of the assembly, Kounteya girded himself. Bhima then challenged the wrestler, who was like Vritra⁸³ himself. Both of them were extremely energetic and both of them were terrible in their valour. They were intoxicated, like giant elephants that were sixty years old. Bhima, the destroyer of enemies, grasped the roaring wrestler and tugged him with his arms. He also roared like a tiger seizing

an elephant. Then the mighty-armed and brave Bhima raised the wrestler up and whirled him around, to the supreme amazement of the other wrestlers and the residents of Matsya. Having whirled him around a hundred times, until he lost his mind and his senses, the mighty-armed Vrikodara flung him down on the ground. The brave Jimuta,⁸⁴ famous in the world, was thus slain. Together with his relatives, Virata was greatly delighted. In his joy, the great-minded king gave a lot of riches to Ballava in that great arena, like Vaishravana.⁸⁵ After having defeated a large number of wrestlers and immensely strong men in the same way, he obtained the supreme of favours from the king of Matsya. No other man could be found who was a match for him. He was then made to fight with tigers, lions and elephants. In the presence of the women from the inner quarters, Virata repeatedly made Vrikodara fight with angry lions that were extremely powerful.

‘Pandava Bibhatsu satisfied Virata and all the women from the inner quarters with his singing and his excellent dancing. O supreme among kings! Nakula satisfied the king with the trained and swift steeds that he assembled there. On seeing Sahadeva’s trained bulls, the king was delighted and gave him a lot of riches. Thus did those bulls among men live there in disguise. They performed various duties for King Virata.’

Section Forty-Six

Kichaka-Vadha Parva

This section has 353 shlokas and eleven chapters.

Chapter 609(13): 21 shlokas

Chapter 610(14): 21 shlokas

Chapter 611(15): 41 shlokas

Chapter 612(16): 16 shlokas

Chapter 613(17): 29 shlokas

Chapter 614(18): 36 shlokas

Chapter 615(19): 30 shlokas

Chapter 616(20): 34 shlokas

Chapter 617(21): 67 shlokas

Chapter 618(22): 30 shlokas

Chapter 619(23): 28 shlokas

Vadha means to kill and is also the act of slaying. Kichaka is Virata's general and Sudeshna's brother and lusts after Droupadi. Kichaka is killed by Bhima, which explains the name of this section.

609(13)

Vaishampayana said, 'The maharatha Parthas lived in disguise in the city of Matsya and ten months elapsed. O lord of the earth! O Janamejaya! Yajnaseni¹ lived there in great unhappiness, serving Sudeshna, though she deserved to be served herself. Virata's general saw the lotus-eyed Panchali roaming around in Sudeshna's abode. As soon as he saw her roaming around like a goddess, like a daughter of the gods, Kichaka² desired her and was oppressed by the arrows of love. Burning with the fire of desire,

the general went to Sudeshna and smilingly said, “I have not seen this beautiful one in Virata’s abode earlier. This beautiful one’s form intoxicates me, like scent generated from liquor. O beautiful one! Who is this one who steals the heart, with the form of a goddess? O beautiful one! Where has she come from and whom does she belong to? She oppresses my mind and has brought me under her control. I think that there is no medicine that can cure me now. Behold! It seems to me that your beautiful serving maid possesses extreme beauty. It is not fitting that she should work for you. She should command me and everything that I possess. Let her grace my beautiful and grand residence, with all its many elephants, horses, chariots, great riches and opulence, with a lot of food and drink and with its handsome gold and colourful adornments.” After consulting Sudeshna, Kichaka went to the daughter of the king³ and spoke to Krishna in a comforting voice, like a jackal confronting a queen of deer⁴ in the forest. “O beautiful one! Your supreme form and your youth are useless if you are alone, like a beautiful garland that is not worn. O beautiful one! Though you are handsome, you are lacking in radiance. O one with the beautiful smile! I will give up the wives I have had before. O beautiful one! I will station myself as your servant. O one with the beautiful face! I will always be under your control.”

‘Droupadi replied, “O son of a *suta*!⁵ You desire me. But I am not one who should be coveted. I am a *sairandhri*, born from an inferior lineage. I am terrible to look at and I perform the duty of dressing hair. O fortunate one! I am another one’s wife. This conduct is beneath you. Wives are loved by all beings. Think of what is dharma. In no way should your mind turn towards another one’s wife. Men who are good in their vows always avoid that which should be abhorred. Men who are evil-souled and overcome by delusion covet that which should not be coveted and attain ill fame. They confront grave danger. O son of a *suta*! Do not rejoice. Otherwise, you may lose your life today, by desiring that which is difficult to obtain. I am protected by brave ones. I cannot be obtained by you. My husbands are *gandharvas*. They will be angered and will kill you. Cease and do not bring about your own destruction. You desire to traverse a path

that men cannot walk on. You are like a stupid child who is on a bank and wants to cross over to the other bank. You may enter the earth, or you may rise up into the sky. You may flee to the furthest shore of the ocean. But you will not be able to free yourself from them. My husbands are the powerful sons of the gods. O Kichaka! You firmly desire me now, as if you are ill and the night of your death has arrived. You desire me, like a child who is asleep on his mother's lap and wishes to obtain the moon.”

610(14)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus turned down by the princess, Kichaka was overcome by a terrible lust that could not be controlled. He went to Sudeshna and told her, “O Kaikeyi!⁶ Act so that I can be united with Sairandhri. O Sudeshna! Otherwise, I will give up my life.” Hearing his many lamentations, the goddess who was Virata's queen felt compassion for him. She debated in her mind and thought about what would best serve her purpose, regarding Krishna. Sudeshna then told the suta, “Have some liquor and food prepared for the festive day. On that day, I will send her to you, asking her to fetch some liquor for me. Thus sent, without any obstructions, you can try to seduce her in private, comforting her according to your desires and uniting with her, if she agrees.” Hearing these words of his sister, Kichaka returned home. He procured supremely refined liquor, fit to be served to a king. He made his excellent cooks prepare the meat of goat and lambs, large quantities of the meat of deer and supreme food and drink.

‘Once this was done, having been informed by Kichaka, Queen Sudeshna sent Sairandhri to Kichaka's residence. Sudeshna said, “O Sairandhri! Arise and go to Kichaka's house. O fortunate one! I am overcome by thirst. Go and fetch me something to drink.” Droupadi replied, “O princess! I will not go to his residence. O queen! You know that he has no shame. O one with the unblemished limbs! O beautiful one! I will not be addicted to desire in your house and I will not be unfaithful to my husbands. O goddess! O beautiful one! You know about the conditions I set when I entered your house earlier. O one with the beautiful hair!

Kichaka is a fool and is insolent with desire. On seeing me, he will cause me dishonour. O beautiful one! I will not go there. O princess! You have many other servant maids who follow your instructions. O fortunate one! Send one of them instead. It is certain that he will dishonour me.”

Sudeshna replied, “If you have been sent by me, he will not cause any violence to you.” With these words, she gave her a golden goblet with a cover. Anxious and weeping and seeking protection with fate, she left for Kichaka’s house to fetch the liquor. Droupadi said, “If it is true that I do not know anyone other than the Pandus, then through that truth, let Kichaka not be able to overpower me when I reach that place.” Then the weak one worshipped Surya⁷ for an instant. Surya got to know everything from the slender-waisted one and instructed an invisible rakshasa to protect her. Under no circumstances was the rakshasa supposed to leave the side of the unblemished one.

‘On seeing Krishna approach like a frightened doe, the suta arose, as if one wishing to cross a river has found a boat.’

611(15)

‘Kichaka said, “O one with the beautiful hair! Welcome. My night has happily turned into day. I have obtained you as my mistress. Do what brings me pleasure. Let them bring golden garlands, conch shells, earrings made out of gold, silken garments and other skins. I have arranged that a divine bed should be spread out for you. Come with me there and drink the honeyed liquor.”

‘Droupadi replied, “The princess has sent me to you to fetch liquor. She told me she was thirsty and I should quickly fetch her something to drink.”

‘Kichaka said, “Some other fortunate one will take refined liquor to the princess.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having said this, the suta’s son grasped her by the right hand. Having been thus seized, she threw Kichaka down on the floor. She rushed to the assembly hall where King Yudhishtira was seated and sought protection. Kichaka pursued the fleeing one and grasped her by the hair. While the king looked on, he flung her down and kicked her with his

foot. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! However, the rakshasa who had been employed by the sun god pushed Kichaka away with the force of the wind. Struck by the strength of the rakshasa, he fell down on the ground. He was whirled around and was motionless, like a tree that has been uprooted. Both Bhimasena and Yudhishtira were seated there and looked on. They could not bear the sight of Krishna being kicked by Kichaka. The great-minded Bhima wished to kill the evil-minded Kichaka and gnashed his teeth in anger. O king! But Dharmaraja restrained Bhima by pressing his thumb with his own.⁸

‘Drupada’s daughter was weeping and clung to the door of the assembly hall. The one with the beautiful hips glanced at her husbands, whose appearances were dejected. She was also bent on protecting the pledge they had taken in the name of dharma. With terrible eyes that seemed to burn down, she told Matsya, “The son of a suta has kicked me with his foot. I am the revered wife of those whose enemies do not dare to sleep when they traverse the earth. The son of a suta has kicked me with his foot. I am the revered wife of those who give and do not ask, those who are truthful and are like brahmanas. The son of a suta has kicked me with his foot. I am the revered wife of those whose war drums and bow twangs are continually heard. The son of a suta has kicked me with his foot. I am the revered wife of those who are energetic and self-controlled, who are powerful and extremely proud. The son of a suta has kicked me with his foot. I am the revered wife of those who, had they not been bound by the noose of dharma, are capable of destroying the entire world. They provide succour to those who seek refuge. They are roaming the world in disguise. Where are those maharathas now? Those powerful and infinitely energetic ones are suffering like eunuchs, while their beloved and chaste wife is tortured by the son of a suta. Where is their intolerance? Where do their valour and energy flow? They cannot protect their wife from being tortured by an evil-minded one. What can I possibly do with Virata, when dharma is being reviled? He witnesses an innocent one being tortured, but tolerates it. O king! You are not acting like a king in your treatment of Kichaka. Your dharma is that of a *dasyu*⁹ and is not deserving of an

assembly hall. I do not see any adherence to one's own dharma in Kichaka, or in Matsya. It seems to me that the courtiers are also oblivious of dharma. O King Virata! I will not censure you in this assembly of people. O Matsya! But it is not right that I should be tortured in your presence. The courtiers have witnessed that Kichaka is being treated as an exception." Virata replied, "I do not know anything about your quarrel, since that occurred outside my sight. Unless I know the truth, how can I judge skilfully?" Having learnt what had happened, those present in the assembly honoured Krishna a lot. They congratulated her and condemned Kichaka. The courtiers said, "The man who possesses this long-eyed one with the unblemished limbs as a wife, has obtained the supreme and need not sorrow over anything." The courtiers saw Krishna and honoured her in this fashion.

'Because of anger, there were drops of perspiration on Yudhishtira's forehead. Kouravya spoke to the princess who was his beloved queen. "O Sairandhri! Do not stay here. Go to Sudeshna's abode. The wives of brave ones suffer on account of their husbands. Though suffering, they conquer the worlds of their husbands through their servitude. I think that your husbands do not see this as a time for anger. Therefore, the gandharvas, who are like the sun in their energy, are not rushing to help you. O Sairandhri! You do not know that this is not the right time and are prancing around like a dancing girl. You are disturbing the Matsyas, who are gambling in the king's assembly hall. O Sairandhri! Depart and the gandharvas will act so as to bring you pleasure." Droupadi replied, "I follow dharma for the sake of those who are extremely tolerant. If the eldest one is addicted to dice,¹⁰ anyone can oppress them." Having spoken these words, Krishna rushed to Sudeshna's residence. The one with the beautiful hips had her hair flowing freely and her eyes were red with anger. When she stopped crying, her face was like the lunar disc in the sky, freed from a net of clouds. Sudeshna asked, "O one with the lovely hips! O beautiful one! Who has oppressed you and why are you crying? O fortunate one! Whose happiness will end today and who has acted towards you in an unpleasant way?" Droupadi replied, "Kichaka kicked me when I

went to fetch liquor for you. The king looked on in the assembly hall, as if this had occurred in private.” Sudeshna replied, “O one with the beautiful hair! If you so think, I will have Kichaka killed. He has been intoxicated by desire and has lusted for one who is not obtainable.” Droupadi said, “He has caused injury to others and they will kill him. I think it is certain that he will go today to the world beyond.””

612(16)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been kicked by the son of a suta, the beautiful princess Krishna blazed forth and planned the general’s death. Drupada’s daughter then went to her own residence and having purified herself, the slender-waisted Krishna washed her body and her garments with water. Weeping, she thought about how she might emerge from her misery. “What will I do? Where will I go? How will my task be accomplished?” While she was thinking in this way, Bhima surfaced in her mind. “Other than Bhima, no one can act so as to bring pleasure to my mind.” She arose from her bed in the night. The spirited and chaste Krishna possessed a protector. Afflicted with great grief in her mind, the sweet-smiling Panchali swiftly went to Bhimasena in the kitchen, like a three-year old cow born in the forest approaches a bull, or a she-elephant approaches a large bull-elephant. She was like a creeper embracing a large and flowering *sala* tree¹¹ on the banks of the Gomati, like the wife of the king of animals¹² waking up a sleeping lion in the deserted forest. Unblemished Panchali spoke to Bhimasena in words that were as sweet as a veena uttering *gandhara* notes.¹³ “O Bhimasena! Arise! Arise! How can you sleep as if you are dead? The evil one, who molested the wife of someone who is not dead, is still alive. My enemy, the evil-doing general, is still alive.” Awoken by the princess, Kouravya arose from his bed and seated himself on a couch covered with cushions, looking like a monsoon cloud. He asked his beloved queen, “Why have you come to me in this hurried fashion? Your complexion is not natural. You appear to be pale and wan. Tell me everything in detail, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant,

agreeable or disagreeable, so that I know. Having heard everything, I will decide what should be done next. O Krishna! I am trusted by you in all deeds. I have repeatedly saved you from all dangers. Quickly tell me what you desire, what task needs to be done. Then return to your bed before the others arise.”

613(17)

‘Droupadi said, “How can a woman, who has Yudhishtira as a husband, not be sorrowful? You know all my miseries. Why are you asking me? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! It burns me that an usher dragged me to an assembly hall, in the midst of the courtiers, calling me a servant maid. O lord! Which other daughter of a king, but for Droupadi, would wish to live like me, after enduring such miseries? When dwelling in the forest, who else but me would endure being molested a second time by the evil-minded Saindhava?¹⁴ Barring me, who else can bear to be alive after having been kicked by Kichaka with his feet, in the presence of the king of Matsya and while that gamester looked on?¹⁵ O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I have been tormented by several miseries like these. O Kounteya! Don’t you know them? How does it profit me to be alive? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O tiger among men! The evil-minded Kichaka is King Virata’s general and brother-in-law. While I dwell in the king’s residence in the disguise of Sairandhri, the evil-minded one incessantly addresses me, asking me to be his wife. O destroyer of enemies! Thus addressed by one who deserves to be killed, my heart is bursting out, like a fruit that time has ripened.

““You should censure your elder brother, who is addicted to gambling. It is because of his deeds that I confront these unending calamities. Who else but him, addicted to gambling, would give up his kingdom, all his possessions and his own self, so as to spend a life in the forest? If he had played from morning till evening for many years and wagered property worth one thousand *nishkas*¹⁶ each time, there would have been no decrease in the value of his golden ornaments, golden coins,¹⁷ garments,

vehicles, teams of animals, goats, sheep, horses and mules. Under the guise of a gambling match, he has been dislodged from all his prosperity. He is now silent like a stupid person, reflecting about his own deeds. When he went out, ten thousand elephants, garlanded with gold and bearing the marks of lotuses, followed him. He now earns a livelihood through dice. A hundred thousand infinitely energetic men showed homage to the great king Yudhishtira in Indraprastha. A hundred thousand servant maids always served him in the kitchen, with plates in their hands, serving guests morning and night. The supreme among generous ones gave away a thousand nishkas. He is now confronted with this great calamity because of his gambling. Many bards and minstrels, with beautiful voices and adorned with decorated and bejewelled earrings, showed him homage in the morning and the evening. One thousand rishis were always seated in his assembly hall. They were rich in austerities and learning and all their wishes were attended to. Without any distraction, he supported the blind, the aged, the unprotected and the destitute of the kingdom. Yudhishtira was always devoted to non-violence. He has now found hell as Matsya's servant. Yudhishtira calls himself Kanka, the gambler in the king's assembly hall. At the time when he lived in Indraprastha, all the kings brought him tribute. He now seeks a salary from others. He was a protector of the earth and all the kings were under his suzerainty. The king has now lost his powers and is under someone else's control. Like the one with the rays,¹⁸ he dazzled the entire earth with his energy. But that Yudhishtira is now a gambler in King Virata's court. O Pandava! Behold that Pandava! He was one whom kings honoured in his assembly hall, accompanied by the rishis. He is now seated below another. The immensely wise one now seeks livelihood from another. Who will not suffer on seeing the undeserving Yudhishtira, with dharma in his soul, thus? The entire earth served that brave one in his assembly hall. He is now seated below another. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Behold that descendant of the Bharata lineage! I am now like an unprotected one, having suffered from many such misfortunes. I am now in the midst of an ocean of grief. O Bhima! Do you not see?"

‘Droupadi said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will now tell you about my great unhappiness. I am telling you this out of great misery and you should not be angry with me. I am bereft of my senses when you fight with tigers, buffaloes and lions in the inner quarters and Kaikeyi¹⁹ watches you. On seeing me unconscious, Kaikeyi will arise and tell her women, ‘I think this affection is born out of this sweet-smiling one living with the cook and she sorrows when he fights with these immensely brave beings. Sairandhri is beautiful in form and Ballava is extremely handsome. The minds of women are impossible to fathom. But it seems to me that they are made for each other. Sairandhri is always overcome by pity because they happily live together. They have lived in this royal household for the same duration of time.’ Through such words, she always makes me known. When she sees me angered, she suspects that I am attached to you. When she utters such words, I am overtaken by great grief. I am immersed in sorrow over Yudhishthira and I cannot bear to be alive.

““Alone on a single chariot, he defeated gods, men and serpents. That youthful one is now a dancing master for King Virata’s daughter. The one with the infinite soul satisfied the fire god in Khandava. Partha has now gone to the inner quarters, like a fire covered in a well. He was a bull among men and enemies were always frightened of him. Dhananjaya is now in a form that is despised by the world. Enemies trembled at the twang of his bow and the slapping of his palms. He now pleases women with the sweet sounds of his singing. A diadem that was like the sun always adorned his head. Dhananjaya’s unkempt hair is now braided. All the celestial weapons are known to that great-souled one. He is the repository of all knowledge and now wears earrings. Thousands of kings, whose energy was unlimited, could not cross him and overcome him in battle, just as the great ocean does not cross the shoreline. That youthful one is now a dancing master for King Virata’s daughter. He hides himself in disguise and serves the daughter. O Bhima! The earth, with its mountains and forests and mobile and immobile objects, trembled at the roar of his chariot. He is the immensely fortunate one whose birth

destroyed Kunti's sorrow. O Bhimasena! I now sorrow over your younger brother. He is adorned in golden ornaments and earrings and sports conch shells in his hands.²⁰ On seeing him approach, my mind is immersed in sorrow. O Bhima! The archer Dhananjaya wears his unkempt hair in a braid. O Bhima! On seeing him surrounded by young maidens, my mind is immersed in sorrow. He is equal to a god. When I see Partha surrounded by young maidens, in the midst of musical instruments, like a bull-elephant in rut surrounded by she-elephants, and in the service of Virata, king of the Matsyas, who pays him, I can no longer see any of the directions. Surely the *arya*²¹ does not know the difficulties Dhananjaya has to confront, or those that Ajatashatru²² is immersed in, having become addicted to evil gambling.

“The youngest Sahadeva is a lord of warriors. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing him tend to cattle, in the disguise of a cowherd, I become pale. O mighty-armed one! I repeatedly reflect upon Sahadeva's conduct. Truth is his valour. But I do not know of any evil act that Sahadeva has done, as a consequence of which, he should attain such unhappiness. O best of the Bharata lineage! On seeing your beloved brother, appointed by Matsya, like a bull among the cattle, fever overcomes me. He is clad in red garments and he is foremost among the cowherds. He shows homage to Virata. Arya²³ always praised brave Sahadeva because of his honoured reputation, his conduct and his virtuous nature. ‘He is modest, sweet in speech, devoted to dharma and dear to me. O Yajnaseni! Comfort him in the forest, even at night.’ O best of warriors! O Pandava! On seeing Sahadeva engaged with cows, covering himself with calf skins at night, how can I bear to live?

“He²⁴ always possessed the three qualities of beauty, weaponry and intelligence. He now tends to Virata's steeds. Behold! How times have changed! The great king looks and the assembled populace watches when Damagranthi²⁵ trains horses and drives them swiftly. I have seen him wait upon the prosperous Virata of Matsya, supreme in his radiance, showing off the horses. O Partha! O scorcher of enemies! How can you think that I will be happy? Because of Yudhishtira, I am afflicted with a hundred

different kinds of miseries. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! There are other miseries too, greater than these. O Kounteya! Listen and I will tell you about them. These many types of unhappiness are drying up my body. What can be a greater misery than that? And all of this is happening while you are still alive.”

615(19)

‘Droupadi said, “Because of the crafty one who is addicted to dice, I roam around in the king’s residence in the form of a sairandhri, washing for Sudeshna. O scorcher of enemies! I am a princess. Look at the extreme and improper acts I perform. Like a diseased one, I am waiting for the time when all my difficulties will be over. For mortals, it is said that prosperity, success, victory and defeat are only transient. Thinking of this, I am waiting for my husbands to arise again. That which leads to a man’s victory may lead to his defeat too. I am waiting for that. Men give and beg, kill and are killed, in that order. I have heard that they kill, and are then killed by enemies. There is nothing that is too heavy for destiny. Nor can destiny ever be transgressed. Therefore, I am waiting for destiny to manifest itself. Where there was no water earlier, there may be water again.²⁶ Thinking of this reversal, I am waiting for us to arise again. If one is not successful because of destiny, even though affairs have been conducted well, it is said that learned ones should endeavour to make destiny turn favourable. I will tell you the reason behind my words, whether you ask me or do not ask me. I am immersed in grief and I will tell you. I am the queen of the sons of Pandu and the daughter of Drupada. Having attained such a plight, who but me would wish to live? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O destroyer of enemies! These sorrows that I have been overtaken by, bring disgrace to all the Kurus, the Panchalas and the Pandavyas. I am sustained by many brothers, fathers-in-law and sons. What woman, other than me, can bear to be so unhappy? In my childhood, I must have performed an act to displease the creator. O bull among the Bharata lineage! His ill favours have brought me this misfortune. O Pandava! Look at the pallor of my complexion, the likes of

which I have not had, even in the worst of difficulties. O Bhima! O Partha! You know how happy I used to be earlier. I have now become a servant maid. I am helpless and can find no peace.

“I think it cannot be anything other than fate. The mighty-armed Partha Dhananjaya, whose bow is terrible, has been pacified, like a fire that is covered. O Partha!²⁷ It is impossible for men to comprehend the fate of beings. I know that this downfall of ours could not have been thought of earlier. You are the likes of Indra and you have always glanced at my face. I am supreme among women. But you now look towards the faces of those who are inferior. O Pandava! Look at my plight, something that I did not deserve. Though all of you are alive, look at how times have changed. The entire earth, up to the frontiers of the ocean, was under my control. I am frightened of Sudeshna and am under her control. Earlier, I used to have servants before me and behind me. But I now walk before Sudeshna and follow her at the back. O Kounteya! Listen to another misery that I find to be insufferable. I have never before had to grind unguents, not even for my own self—only for Kunti. O fortunate one! I now have to grind sandalwood. O Kounteya! Look at my hands. They have never looked like this earlier.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having said this, she showed him both her calloused hands.

‘Droupadi said, “I was never scared of Kunti, or any one of you. But I now stand like a servant maid before Virata, always terrified. ‘What will the emperor tell me? Have I prepared the unguents properly? Perhaps Matysa will not like sandalwood when it has been ground by others.’”

Vaishampayana said, ‘Narrating her miseries to Bhimasena, the beautiful Krishna wept silently and glanced towards Bhimasena. Her voice was choked with tears. She sighed repeatedly. Bhimasena’s heart was shattered and she said, “O Bhima! In earlier times, the offence that I have caused to the gods cannot have been trifling. O Pandava! I am unfortunate that I continue to be alive, when I should be dead.” Vrikodara, the destroyer of enemy warriors, then placed the swollen and calloused hands of the trembling one against his face and began to weep. The valorous

Kounteya grasped them. Extremely miserable, and in a voice choked with tears, he spoke these words.’

616(20)

‘Bhimasena said, “Shame on the strength of my arms and on Phalguna’s²⁸ Gandiva! Your hands used to be red earlier, but are now covered in callouses. I would have created a great uproar in Virata’s assembly hall, but Dharmaraja restrained me with a glance. O beautiful one! Knowing his intentions, I controlled myself. That we have been dislodged from the kingdom, that I have not killed the Kurus, Suyodhana, Karna and Soubala Shakuni, that I have not sliced off the evil Duhshasana’s head—all of these burn me, like stakes impaled in my heart. O fortunate one! Do not abandon dharma. O one with the beautiful hips! O immensely intelligent one! Conquer your anger. If King Yudhishtira hears this censure from you, he is certain to give up his life. O fortunate one! O one with the beautiful hips! O slender-waisted one! So will Dhananjaya and the twins. When they have gone to the other world, I will no longer be capable of being alive. O beautiful one! Sukanya, the daughter of Sharyati, followed Bhargava Chyavana, who had become a termite hill, into the forest, so as to pacify him.²⁹ You may have heard of the beauty of Nadayani Indrasena. In earlier times, she followed her aged husband, though he was one thousand years old.³⁰ You may have heard about Janaka’s daughter, Vaidehi Sita. She followed her husband when he dwelt in the great forest.³¹ Rama’s beloved queen was molested by a rakshasa. Though she went through many difficulties, the one with the beautiful hips followed no one other than Rama. O timid one! Like that, Lopamudra possessed youth and beauty. By renouncing all the objects of desire that can be obtained by men, she followed Agastya.³² O fortunate one! Just as these beautiful ladies³³ became famous because of their devotion to their husbands, you will also triumph because of all your qualities. Wait for a little more time. Only a month and a half is left. When thirteen years are completed, you will become a king’s queen again.”

‘Droupadi replied, “O Bhima! I shed tears because I was suffering. I could not control my misery. I did not censure the king.³⁴ O Bhimasena! O mighty-armed one! One need not dwell over what is past. The present is here and it is time for you to act. O Bhima! Kaikeyi is anxious that I surpass her in beauty. She is constantly worried that the king³⁵ might approach me. Knowing her intentions, the evil-minded Kichaka, knowing his own false intentions, always propositions me. He has angered me. O Bhima! But I have repeatedly controlled my anger. I have told Kichaka, who has lost control over his own soul because of lust, ‘Protect yourself. I am the beloved wife and queen of five gandharvas. Those brave and invincible ones, who act out of courage, will slay you.’ On being thus addressed, the evil-souled Kichaka replied, ‘O Sairandhri! O one with the beautiful smiles! I am not frightened of gandharvas. I will kill a hundred, and a hundred thousand, gandharvas who are assembled in battle. O timid one! Give me a chance.’ Thus addressed, I again spoke to the suta who was overtaken by lust. ‘You do not have the strength to counter the famous gandharvas. I am born in a noble lineage and am virtuous in conduct. I have always been established in dharma. O Kichaka! I do not desire that anyone should be killed. That is the reason that you are still alive.’ Thus addressed, the evil-souled one burst out in loud laughter. He does not stay on the right path. Nor does he follow dharma. The evil-souled one is evil in his sentiments and is overcome by lust and desire. The insolent and evil-souled one has been repulsed repeatedly. But whenever he sets sight on me, he molests me and I am certain to give up my life. While all of you seek to observe dharma, a great dharma is being destroyed. The wife must be protected at the appropriate time. If the wife is protected, the offspring are protected. If the offspring are protected, one’s own self is protected. I have heard brahmanas speak about the dharma of different *varnas*.³⁶ There is no dharma for kshatriyas other than the destruction of enemies. While Dharmaraja looked on, Kichaka kicked me with his foot. O Bhimasena! O immensely strong one! It was in your sight too. It was you who protected me from the terrible Jatasura and together with your brothers, also from Jayadratha.³⁷ Kill the evil one who molests me in this way. O descendant

of the Bharata lineage! Because he is favoured by the king, he causes me grief. This one is overtaken by lust. Destroy him like an earthen pot against stone. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He is responsible for many of my miseries. If the sun rises tomorrow morning and he is alive, I will drink poison, rather than fall into Kichaka's clutches. O Bhimasena! It is better for me to die now, in front of you.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having said this, she clung to Bhima's chest and started to weep. Having embraced her, Bhima offered her great consolation. He thought of Kichaka in his mind and licked the corners of his mouth.’

617(21)

‘Bhimasena said, “O fortunate one! O timid one! I will do what you have said. I will kill Kichaka today, together with all his relatives. O Yajnaseni! O one with the beautiful smiles! Discard your sorrow and grief. Tomorrow evening, set up a tryst with him. The king of the Matsyas has built a dancing hall. Maidens dance there during the day and retire to their houses at night. O timid one! There is a divan there. It has been constructed well, with sturdy legs. There, I will show him his grandfathers who have died earlier. When you converse with him, make sure that no one sees you. O fortunate one! But act so that he goes there.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having thus talked and shed tears of sorrow, but bearing up their spirits, they waited for the night to be over. When the night had passed and it was dawn, Kichaka arose. He went to the royal palace and told Droupadi, “I kicked you with my foot in the assembly hall, in the king's sight. When someone stronger than you molested you, you could find no protector. It is said that Virata is the king of the Matsyas only in name. As a general of the army, I am the real king of the Matsyas. O timid one! Be happy and I will become your servant. O one with the beautiful hips! I will instantly give you one hundred nishkas. I will also give you one hundred servant maids and another one hundred servants. I will give you chariots drawn by she-mules. O timid one! Let us be united.” Droupadi replied, “O Kichaka! I will agree. But you must accept a

condition first. None of your friends or brothers must know that you have gone to unite with me. I am scared that the illustrious gandharvas may get to know. If you promise this, then I will come under your control.”

Kichaka said, “O one with the beautiful hips! I will do exactly as you have said. O fortunate one! I will go alone to your secluded house to unite with you. O one whose thighs are like plantain trees!³⁸ I am crazy with desire for you. The gandharvas, as dazzling as the sun, will not be able to see you there.” Droupadi replied, “There is a dancing hall that the king of the Matsyas has built, maidens dance there during the day and retire to their houses at night. Go there when it is dark and the gandharvas will not get to know. There is no doubt that we will then not be detected in sin.”

‘O king! Thinking of the conversation that she had had with Kichaka, the remaining half of the day seemed to be like an entire month. Kichaka went home, extremely delighted. The fool did not know that his death had arrived in the form of a sairandhri. He was fond of fragrances, ornaments and garlands. Intoxicated with love, he decorated himself with these. While he was doing these tasks, time seemed to be inordinately long. He thought about the one with the long eyes. Though he would soon be freed of all his prosperity, he seemed to increase in prosperity, like the wick of a burning lamp that is about to be extinguished. Kichaka was intoxicated with desire and completely trustful. He thought about the union and did not notice that the day was passing.

‘Then Droupadi went to Bhima in the kitchen. The fortunate one seated herself next to Kouravya, her husband. The one with the beautiful hair spoke. “O scorcher of enemies! As you had said, I have fixed an assignation with Kichaka in the dancing hall. In the night, Kichaka will come to the deserted dancing hall alone. O mighty-armed one! Kill Kichaka. O Kounteya! Kichaka, the son of a suta, is intoxicated with insolence. O Pandava! When he goes to the dancing hall, rob him of his life. Because of his pride, the son of a suta looks down on the gandharvas. You are supreme among warriors. Uproot him, like an elephant does a stalk. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Wipe away my tears of misery. O fortunate one! Salvage your own honour and that of your lineage.”

Bhimasena replied, “O one with the beautiful thighs! You are welcome. You have brought me pleasant news. O beautiful one! I will do that, without anyone else’s aid. O beautiful one! The news of your assignation with Kichaka has brought me the same delight that I felt on killing Hidimba.³⁹ By my brothers and by dharma, I am truthfully pledging that I will kill Kichaka, the way the lord of the gods slew Vritra.⁴⁰ Whether in private, or in public, I will bring down Kichaka. It is certain that if the Matsyas get in the way, I will kill them too. I will then kill Duryodhana and regain the earth. Let Kunti’s son, Yudhishtira, worship the Matsyas, if he so desires.” Droupadi said, “O lord! O brave one! If you do not wish to deviate from the pledge you have taken on my account, bring down Kichaka in secret.” Bhimasena replied, “O timid one! I will do exactly as you have said. O unblemished one! Today, I will remain invisible in the darkness. The evil-souled Kichaka craves for what cannot be obtained. I will crush his head, like an elephant does a *bilva* fruit.”⁴¹ Bhima went there first, hidden in the night, and seated himself, waiting for Kichaka, like an invisible lion waiting for deer.

‘Kichaka adorned himself according to what pleased him. At the appointed hour, he arrived in the dancing hall, hoping to unite with Panchali. That room was enveloped in great darkness. Thinking this to be a sign, he entered. The infinitely energetic Bhima had already arrived there earlier and was stationed alone. The extremely evil-minded one went up to him, reclining on the divan and blazing in anger because of the molestation caused to Krishna, like death. Kichaka was intoxicated with lust and approached him. His heart filled with delight, he smilingly told him, “I have brought you a lot of riches of different kinds. All of this is for you and I have arrived quickly. The women who are in my household have suddenly begun to praise me, saying that there is no other man who is as well dressed and handsome as I am.” Bhimasena replied, “It is my good fortune that you are so handsome and it is good fortune that you are praising yourself. I do not think that you have ever been caressed the way you are going to be caressed now.” Having said this, the mighty-armed

Kounteya Bhima, terrible in valour, leapt up and laughed at that worst of men. Bhima seized him by the hair, adorned with garlands and fragrances.

‘Thus grasped forcibly by the hair, that supreme among strong ones freed his hair with his strength and grasped Pandava by the arms. A wrestling match started between those angry lions among men, like two powerful bull-elephants fighting over a she-elephant during the spring season. Though he was angry, Bhima reeled when the powerful Kichaka struck him and brought him down to the ground, on his knees. Having been thrown down on the ground by the powerful Kichaka, Bhima swiftly arose like a serpent that has been struck with a staff. The suta and Pandava were both insolent and proud of their strength. The strong ones grappled in the dead of the night in that deserted place. That best of houses trembled repeatedly, when those strong and enraged ones roared at each other. Bhima struck the powerful one on the breast with the palm of his hand. But Kichaka, tormented by anger, did not budge by even a single step. For some time, the suta, oppressed by Bhima’s strength, bore the force, impossible to bear on earth. But then his strength began to fade. On knowing that he was weakening, the immensely strong Bhimasena grasped him to his chest with force and pressed until he lost his senses. Vrikodara, supreme among victorious ones, was driven by wrath and was panting. He grasped Kichaka painfully by the hair. The immensely strong Bhima began to roar, like a tiger hungry for meat that has grasped a large deer. He forced his feet, his hands, his hand, his neck and all his limbs into his trunk, just as the wielder of the Pinaka once did with an animal.⁴²

‘Thus all the limbs were rendered into a mound of flesh. The immensely strong Bhimasena then showed this to Krishna. The greatly energetic one, descendant of the Pandu lineage, told Droupadi, “O Panchali! Behold! This is what has happened to the one driven by lust.” Having thus killed Kichaka, his anger vanished and he was pacified. He took his leave of Krishna Droupadi and quickly returned to the kitchen. Having ensured that Kichaka was slain, Droupadi, supreme among women, was delighted and all her miseries disappeared. She told the guards of the assembly hall, “Kichaka has been killed by my gandharva husbands. He lusted after

another one's wife. Come and see." On hearing her words, the guards of the dancing hall swiftly arrived in thousands, holding torches. Entering the house, they saw that Kichaka had been killed. They saw him lifeless, splattered with blood. "Where is the neck? Where are the feet? Where are the hands? Where is the head?" Having thus wondered, they decided that he had been killed by a gandharva.'

618(22)

Vaishampayana said, 'At that time, all the relatives assembled there and on seeing Kichaka killed, surrounded him from all sides and began to weep. All their body hair stood up and they were terrified when they saw Kichaka. All his limbs were mangled, like a turtle that has been dragged to the land. He had been crushed by Bhimasena, like a *danava* by Indra. They sought to take him outside, wishing to perform his funeral rites. Then the assembled sons of the suta saw Krishna. The unblemished one was stationed nearby, leaning against a pillar. Among the assembled sutas, an Upakichaka⁴³ said, "Let us swiftly kill this unchaste one, because of whom Kichaka has been slain. Or let us not kill her. Let us burn her with her beloved. Though he is dead, let us do what would have brought the son of suta pleasure." Then they told Virata, "Kichaka has been killed because of her. We will burn her with him. You should give us permission." O lord of the earth! Knowing the valour of the sutas, the king gave permission that Sairandhri should be burnt with the son of the suta. They approached the terrified and lotus-eyed Krishna. She was stupefied and the Kichakas forcibly grabbed her. All of them raised and tied the slender-waisted one and carried her in the direction of the cremation ground. O king! The unblemished one was thus borne away by the sons of the suta. Krishna wailed for her protectors, because she did have protectors.

'Droupadi said, "Jaya! Jayanta! Vijaya! Jayatsena! Jayadbala!"⁴⁴ Hear my words. The sons of the suta are carrying me away. The twangs of their bows and the slapping of their arms is heard in great battles. The roars of their chariots are terrible. They are swift. They are the powerful and

illustrious gandharvas. Hear my words. The sons of the suta are carrying me away.””

Vaishampayana said, ‘As soon as he heard the wail of Krishna’s piteous words, Bhima unhesitatingly leapt up from his bed. Bhimasena said, “O Sairandhri! I have heard the words that you have spoken. O timid one! You have no reason to fear the sons of the suta.” Having spoken these words, the mighty-armed one stretched and extended his body and changed his attire, in a great rage. He emerged, but not through a door.⁴⁵ Bhimasena scaled the ramparts and swiftly uprooted a tree. He dashed towards the cremation ground, following the Kichakas. That tree was ten *vyamas* long⁴⁶ and he brandished it, with its trunk and its branches. The strong one rushed towards the sutas, like the god of death with a staff in his hand. The impact of his thighs made *nyagrodha*, *ashvattha* and *kimshuka* trees fall down on the ground and these were piled in a heap. On seeing the gandharva arrive,⁴⁷ like an extremely enraged lion, all the sutas were terrified and trembled in sorrow and dread. The Upakichakas were about to burn their elder brother and saw the gandharva advance like death. Trembling in sorrow and dread, they told each other, “A powerful and angry gandharva is advancing, brandishing a tree. Swiftly release Sairandhri. She is the reason for this great danger.” On seeing the tree that had been uprooted by Bhimasena, they released Droupadi and fled towards the city.

‘When Bhima saw them running away, like the wielder of the vajra seeing the danavas,⁴⁸ he dispatched one hundred and five of them to Yama’s abode. O lord of the earth! He then released Krishna and comforted her. The mighty-armed one, the invincible Vrikodara, told Panchali Droupadi, whose face was despondent and whose eyes were full of tears, “O timid one! Those who molested you, though you are blameless, have been killed. O Krishna! Return to the city. You have nothing to fear. I will go to Virata’s kitchen through a different route.” O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thus one hundred and five were slain there, like a giant forest that has been razed down, with its trees scattered. O king! One hundred and five Kichakas were killed. Including the general

earlier, there were one hundred and six sutas. Men and women gathered to see that great and extraordinary deed. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They were extremely astounded and had nothing to say.’

619(23)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On seeing that the sutas had been killed, they went and told the king, “O king! The gandharvas have killed more than one hundred sons of the suta. Like the giant peak of a mountain shattered by a vajra, the sutas can be seen, scattered on the ground. Sairandhri has been set free and is returning to your residence. O king! The entire city now faces danger. Sairandhri is beautiful and the gandharvas are extremely powerful. There is no doubt that men are addicted to sexual intercourse. O king! Swiftly lay down some rules so that your city is not destroyed by one who is in the disguise of a sairandhri.” On hearing their words, Virata, the lord of the armies, said, “Let the funeral rites be performed for the sutas. Kindle a fire well and let all of them be cremated together. Swiftly burn the Kichakas, with jewels and fragrances.” Filled with fear, the king then spoke to his queen Sudeshna, “When Sairandhri arrives, tell her these words in my name. ‘O Sairandhri! O fortunate one! Go wherever you desire! O one with the beautiful hips! The king is scared of being defeated by the gandharvas.’ I cannot tell her this myself, because she is protected by the gandharvas. But women cannot cause offence. That is the reason I am asking you to tell her.” Krishna had been freed from danger and the sons of the suta had been destroyed. She had been freed by Bhimasena and returned to the city, like a young and spirited doe that had been frightened by a tiger. She washed her limbs and her garments with water.

‘O king! On seeing her, the men fled in the ten directions. Frightened of the gandharvas, some of them closed their eyes. O king! Panchali saw Bhimasena standing at the door of the kitchen, like a large and crazy elephant. She was surprised and softly spoke to him in a secret language,⁴⁹ “I honour the king of the gandharvas, who has freed me.” Bhimasena replied, “The men who roam here are under her control now. Having heard

her words, they are roaming without any debts.”⁵⁰ She saw mighty-armed Dhananjaya in the dancing hall. He was instructing Virata’s daughter in dancing. Emerging from the dancing hall with Arjuna, the maiden saw Krishna arrive, who had been molested though she had been innocent. The maiden said, “O Sairandhri! It is fortunate that you have been freed. It is fortunate that you have returned. Though you were innocent, you were molested and it is fortunate that the sutas who caused this have been slain.” Brihannada said, “O Sairandhri! How were you freed? How were those evil ones slain? I wish to hear everything exactly as it happened.” Sairandhri replied, “O Brihannada! What do you have to do with a sairandhri? O fortunate one! You live happily in the quarters meant for women. You will not confront the miseries a sairandhri does. You must be asking about my unhappiness in jest.” Brihannada said, “O fortunate one! Brihannada also faces supreme unhappiness, having been reduced to an inferior life. O girl! You do not understand this.” Together with the maiden, Droupadi entered the king’s residence.

‘She had no desire to run away and went before Sudeshna. The princess then communicated Virata’s words to her. “O Sairandhri! Swiftly go wherever you desire to go. O fortunate one! The king is scared of being defeated by the gandharvas. That apart, you are young and have beautiful eyebrows. Your beauty is unsurpassed on earth.” Sairandhri replied, “O beautiful one! Let the king excuse me for thirteen days.”⁵¹ There is no doubt that the gandharvas will have accomplished their tasks by then. They will then take me away and do whatever brings you pleasure. It is certain that they will do that which is best for the king and his relatives.”’

Section Forty-Seven

Go-Grahana Parva

This section has 1009 shlokas and thirty-nine chapters.

*Chapter 620(24): 21 shlokas
Chapter 621(25): 17 shlokas
Chapter 622(26): 10 shlokas
Chapter 623(27): 28 shlokas
Chapter 624(28): 14 shlokas
Chapter 625(29): 28 shlokas
Chapter 626(30): 30 shlokas
Chapter 627(31): 24 shlokas
Chapter 628(32): 50 shlokas
Chapter 629(33): 21 shlokas
Chapter 630(34): 19 shlokas
Chapter 631(35): 26 shlokas
Chapter 632(36): 47 shlokas
Chapter 633(37): 15 shlokas
Chapter 634(38): 58 shlokas
Chapter 635(39): 23 shlokas
Chapter 636(40): 27 shlokas
Chapter 637(41): 23 shlokas
Chapter 638(42): 31 shlokas
Chapter 639(43): 21 shlokas
Chapter 640(44): 22 shlokas
Chapter 641(45): 26 shlokas
Chapter 642(46): 18 shlokas
Chapter 643(47): 19 shlokas
Chapter 644(48): 23 shlokas
Chapter 645(49): 23 shlokas
Chapter 646(50): 23 shlokas*

Chapter 647(51): 17 shlokas
Chapter 648(52): 28 shlokas
Chapter 649(53): 69 shlokas
Chapter 650(54): 20 shlokas
Chapter 651(55): 25 shlokas
Chapter 652(56): 28 shlokas
Chapter 653(57): 19 shlokas
Chapter 654(58): 13 shlokas
Chapter 655(59): 44 shlokas
Chapter 656(60): 19 shlokas
Chapter 657(61): 29 shlokas
Chapter 658(62): 11 shlokas

Go means cattle and grahana means to seize. So this section is about seizing cattle. With Kichaka's death, Virata is weakened and the Kouravas and Trigartas invade Matsya to rob Virata of his cattle. Virata is defeated by Susharma, the king of the Trigartas. However, the four Pandavas (Yudhishtira, Bhima, Nakula, Sahadeva) defeat Susharma and free Virata. Meanwhile, the Kurus rob Virata's kingdom of sixty thousand cattle. However, they are defeated by Arjuna, with Uttara as a charioteer. The Kurus return and the cattle are regained.

620(24)

Vaishampayana said, 'O lord of the earth! When Kichaka and his younger brothers were killed, people thought about how oppressive they had been and were amazed. There was speculation in the city and the countryside. "Kichaka was loved by the king because of his valour and great spirit. The evil-minded one oppressed men and molested their wives. It is certain that the gandharvas have killed the evil-souled and wicked one." O great king! In country after country, people talked about Kichaka, who had been the destroyer of enemy armies and had been invincible.

'Dhritarashtra's son had employed spies. They searched many villages, kingdoms and cities. Accomplishing the task that they had been assigned, they inspected countries and returned anxiously to Nagapura.¹ They saw King Kouravya, Dhritarashtra's son, together with Drona, Karna, Kripa and the great-souled Bhishma. They told Duryodhana, who was seated in the assembly hall with his brothers and the maharathas from Trigarta.² "O Indra among men! Always observing great care, we searched for the Pandavas in that great forest. It is deserted and is infested with wild

animals. It is covered with many different kinds of trees, creepers and a large number of vines, shrouded with various thickets. The Parthas are extremely firm in their valour and we have not been able to find out where they have gone. We searched for their footsteps along every possible road, on mountain peaks, summits, many countries, in inhabited regions, mountainous villages and cities. O Indra among men! We have searched in many directions, but have not been able to find the Pandavas. O fortunate one! O bull among men! They have completely disappeared. O supreme among charioteers! O Indra among men! While we searched for those warriors, we followed their charioteers for some time. We enquired in the right fashion and have got to know everything. O scorcher of enemies! The charioteers reached Dvaravati without the Parthas. O king! The Pandavas are not there, nor Krishna, devoted to her husbands. They have completely vanished. Homage to thee! O bull among the Bharata lineage! We do not know the destinations or the residences of those great-souled ones. Nor do we know about the conduct or the deeds of the Pandavas. O Indra among men! O lord of the earth! Instruct us. While searching for the Pandavas, what will we do next? But listen to our pleasant words, which will ensure your fortune and welfare. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The great-souled Kichaka, King Matsya's suta, who defeated the Trigartas with a large army, has been brought down and killed in the night by invisible gandharvas. O one without decay! The evil-souled one and his brothers are dead. O Kouravya! Hearing this pleasant news about the destruction of our enemy, you should be content and can decide on what should be done next.”

621(25)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On hearing these words, King Duryodhana thought for a long time and then spoke to those who were in the assembly hall. “It is indeed very difficult to examine all courses of action up to the ultimate end. Therefore, all of you must try to determine where the Pandavas have gone. They were to spend the thirteenth year in concealment. Most of it has passed and only a little bit remains. If the Pandavas, who follow the

vow of truth, can spend the remaining part of the year, they will have fulfilled their pledge. Because of their miseries, it is certain that they will all be angry with the Kouravas, like kings of serpents and virulent snakes. But if they are detected before the time has passed, all of them will again return to the forest, forced to control their wrath and wearing miserable disguises. Therefore, take measures to swiftly detect them. Our kingdom will then be without dissension, without decay and without rivals for a long time.” Karna then said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Let other men go, those who are shrewder, more skilled and loyal. Let those spies swiftly travel in disguise and roam in countries that are prosperous and populated, in assemblages of virtuous ones and mendicants, along roads and places of pilgrimage and places where mining takes place. Let them carefully ask men, with humility. The Pandavas are living in disguise. They must be sought by skilled spies, who are themselves disguised. Employ many, one after another, to search in rivers and bowers, places of pilgrimage, villages, cities, beautiful hermitages and mountainous caverns.” The younger brother Duhshasana was addicted to evil traits. He then told his older brother, “All of us should pay attention to what Karna has said. As instructed, let all the spies search in all those places. Let many others be employed and let them search in every country, in the proper way. Nothing has been known about their destinations, residences and occupations. They are dwelling in great secrecy. Or perhaps they have gone to the other shore of the ocean. They are vain about their bravery and they may have been eaten up in the great forest by predators. Or they may have confronted a calamity and been destroyed for eternity. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Therefore, forget all anxieties. O lord of men! If you so wish, do what must be done with appropriate enthusiasm.”

622(26)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Drona was immensely valorous and knew everything about artha. He then spoke. “Those who are like them never face destruction or defeat. They are brave and possess learning. They possess intelligence and are in control of their senses. They are

knowledgeable about dharma and are grateful. They are devoted to Dharmaraja. They know the nature of policy, dharma and artha. He³ is like an attentive father towards them. The eldest brother is always established in dharma and follows the truth. He obeys his elders. O king! The great-souled brothers follow their brother. Ajatashatru⁴ is humble and follows his brothers. Why should Partha⁵ not follow a conduct that ensures the welfare of those obedient and great-souled ones? That is the reason they have been waiting for this time to arrive. I have perceived in my mind that such persons cannot have been destroyed. Therefore, waste no time and decide on the course of action that must be followed. Think about the right course of action and think about where they might be residing. The sons of Pandu are always self-controlled. They will be difficult to detect. It is certain that they are brave. They do not commit sin and are devoted to austerities. Partha is pure in soul and possesses all the qualities. He is truthful, virtuous and upright. He is like a mass of energy and can blind anyone's eyes. Knowing thus, let us search for them again. Let us use brahmanas, spies, *siddhas*⁶ and all others who know them.”

623(27)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Bhishma, Shantanu’s son, was the grandfather of the Bharatas. He was learned in the sacred texts and knew about places and time and the nature of everything. He knew all about dharma. After the preceptor had spoken, he praised those words. To ensure the welfare of the Bharatas, he addressed these words to them. In accordance with his devotion towards dharma, he spoke about his affection for Yudhishthira, who knew about dharma. Such words are always liked by the virtuous and the strict, but are difficult for dishonest ones to accept.

‘Bhishma thus spoke words that are honoured by the righteous. “It is exactly as brahmana Drona, who knows everything about artha, has said. The Pandavas possess all the auspicious marks and cannot be destroyed. They are learned and have good conduct. They observe righteous vows. They follow the instructions of the aged. They are devoted to truthful

vows. They know about auspicious times and follow rites at those times. They are pure in their vows. They cannot be destroyed when they uphold the ways of the virtuous. The Pandavas are protected through dharma and through their own valour. It is my view that they cannot have been destroyed. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I will tell you my thoughts on what should be done about the Pandavas. This is the right policy and it can only be appreciated by those who follow good policy, not by others. When we think about the Pandavas, we should do what it is possible for us to do. Listen to me when I tell you. We should use intelligence, not animosity. O son!⁷ I never give such counsel to those who are dishonest. One who follows the instructions of elders is always established in truthfulness. Good advice must always be given, and never that which is evil. If one wishes for dharma, one must always speak according to one's intelligence. I do not think the way these other people do. Wherever King Yudhishtira is, whether it is in the city or the countryside, the people will not be envious, malicious, insolent or jealous. The people there will all be devoted to their own dharma. There will be many incantations to the *brahman*.⁸ Oblations will be completed. There will be many sacrifices, with a lot of gifts. There is no doubt that the rain god will always shower there at the right time. The earth will be full of grain and free from disease. The grain will be succulent and the fruit will have all the qualities. The garlands will be fragrant and the words will be soft and auspicious. The wind will be pleasant to the touch and all meetings will be friendly. Where King Yudhishtira lives, there will not be any fear. The cows will be plentiful, not weak and difficult to milk. Milk, curds and butter will be tasty and good for the health. Whatever be the country where King Yudhishtira is, food and drink will be succulent, with all the qualities. Taste, touch, smell and sound will possess all the qualities. Wherever King Yudhishtira is, all sights will be delightful. Everything will possess its own qualities in this thirteenth year. O son! In the country where the Pandavas obtain protection, people will be content, cheerful, pure, health, honourable towards gods and guests, devoted towards all beings, generous, with great energy and devoted to the eternal

dharma. They will discard the impure and serve the pure. They will sacrifice and observe good vows. Such will people be, wherever King Yudhishtira is. O son! They will give up false speech. Everything will be pure, beneficial and auspicious. Wherever King Yudhishtira lives, everyone will strive for the auspicious and possess auspicious intelligence. The men there will always seek to ensure welfare. O son! The one with dharma in his soul is invisible and cannot be detected by brahmanas. How can ordinary men then be capable of finding out the Partha? Truth, perseverance, generosity, complete peace, extreme forgiveness, humility, prosperity, fame, great energy, non-violence and honesty exist in him. The intelligent one has taken care about his disguised place of residence. I have described his destination with due care. What else can I say? Now think about this and decide what seems beneficial to you. O Kouravya! If you have any faith in me, do this quickly.”

624(28)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Sharadvan’s son, Kripa, spoke the following words. “Everything that the aged one⁹ has said about the Pandavas is full of dharma and artha, is appropriate, and has been argued with reason. Listen to what I have to say, and it is similar to Bhishma’s words. Let us reflect about how we can determine their destinations with the use of those who live in places of pilgrimage. Let us follow a policy that ensures our welfare. O son!¹⁰ One should not ignore even ordinary enemies. O son! In the field of battle, the Pandavas are skilled in the use of all weapons. The great-souled Pandavas are in disguise and are dwelling in secret until the time is up. When the time arrives for them to return, you should determine your own strength in your own kingdom and that of other kingdoms. There is no doubt that the time for the Pandavas to rise is near. When the time has elapsed, the great-souled and immensely strong Parthas will be full of great endeavour. The Pandavas are infinitely energetic. Therefore, decide on forces, a treasury and a policy so that, when the time arrives, we can deal with them in an appropriate way. O son! I think that you should get to

know everything about your own strength and those of all your friends, whether they are strong or weak. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! We should know our strength, whether it is superior, inferior or equal. Whether we are happy or unhappy, we will then be able to enter into an agreement with our rivals. With those who are stronger, we will use *sama*, *bheda*, *dana* and *danda*.¹¹ With those who are weak in strength, we will use force in the appropriate way. Having pacified our friends, we will easily raise an army. When you have extended your treasury and your forces well, you will obtain complete success. You will then be able to counter powerful enemies who arrive, and even the Pandavas, who are weaker in forces and vehicles. O Indra among men! Having thus determined a decision in accordance with your own dharma and the appropriate time, you will attain happiness for a long time.”

625(29)

Vaishampayana said, ‘King Susharma of Trigata, the leader of a large number of chariots, had been repeatedly defeated earlier by Kichaka, the suta of the Matsyas, accompanied by the Salveyakas. When the time was right, that lord swiftly spoke these words of grave import. O lord! His forces, together with those of his relatives, had earlier been defeated by that powerful one. He now looked at Karna and spoke to Duryodhana. “In earlier times, using his greater powers, the king of Matsya oppressed my kingdom. The powerful Kichaka was his general. The evil-souled one was terrible and invincible and was famous on earth because of his valour. That wicked and cruel one has now been killed by the gandharvas. O king! On his being killed, it is my view that Virata has lost his insolence and is without endeavour and without refuge. O unblemished one! If it pleases you, let me, all the Kouravas and the great-souled Karna go there. I think that this occurrence requires immediate action that will fetch us benefits. Let all of us go to that kingdom, which is full of foodgrains. We will take away all its jewels and many riches. We will rob the villages and provinces and divide them up. We will invade his city by force and take away the many thousands of excellent cattle. O lord of the earth! The Kouravas,

together with the Trigartas, arrayed well, will take away all the cattle. We will rob him of his virility and force an alliance on him. We will kill all his soldiers and bring him under our suzerainty. Having brought him under our subjugation, we will dwell there happily. There is no doubt that this will increase your strength.”

‘On hearing these words, Karna told the king, “Susharma has spoken words that are appropriate to the occasion and they are for our welfare. Let our forces yoke their mounts and swiftly march out. O unblemished one! Let us arrange our forces, or whatever else that you desire. Consult with the wise elders among the Kurus, our grandfather, the preceptor Drona and Sharadvan’s son, Kripa. Do what all of them think and let us advance. We should advance quickly and overpower that lord of the earth. What do we have to do with the Pandavas? They are weak in riches, forces and manliness. They have either been destroyed, or have reached Yama’s abode. O king! Let us attack Virata’s kingdom without any anxiety. Let us grab his cattle and his many other riches.” King Duryodhana swiftly accepted Vaikartana¹² Karna’s words. He himself instructed Duhshasana, who was always devoted to his commands. “Consult with the elders and swiftly yoke the army. As instructed, we will go there, with all the Kouravas. As instructed, let maharatha King Susharma also go there, with all his forces and vehicles. Let him go to Matsya first, but concealing his intentions. We will follow him, but a day later. Preparing ourselves well, we will advance towards Matsya’s territory. Suddenly arriving in Virata’s city, we will swiftly subdue the cowherds and take away their great riches. There are hundreds of thousands of handsome cattle, with all the qualities. We will divide our forces into two and rob him of these.” O lord of the earth! As commanded, Susharma marched in a south-eastern direction. He began to rob the cattle on the seventh lunar day of *dharmapaksha*.¹³ O king! On the following day, the eighth day, all the Kouravas joined forces and robbed thousands of cowsheds.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘O great king! The infinitely energetic and great-souled Pandavas had adopted disguises and dwelt in Virata’s excellent city. While they lived there, the promised period elapsed. They performed tasks for Virata, lord of the earth. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! After the end of the thirteenth year, Susharma swiftly robbed a large number of cattle. A herdsman then arrived at the city with great speed and descended from his chariot. He saw the king of Matsya seated, wearing earrings and bracelets. He was surrounded by brave warriors, all adorned with earrings and armlets. He was surrounded by his advisers, together with the Pandavas, bulls among men. The great king, the extender of the kingdom, was seated in his assembly hall. He approached Virata, bowed in worship, and said, “The Trigartas have vanquished us, together with our relatives, in battle. They are taking away hundreds and thousands of cattle. O Indra among men! Rescue your animals quickly, or they will be lost.” When he heard this, the king of Matsya assembled his army.

‘There were a large number of chariots, elephants and horses. There were flags and infantry. The kings and the princes donned their armour, bright and colourful and prepared well. Virata’s beloved brother, Shatanika, donned armour made out of molten gold and made firm with an underlay of iron. Madirashva, younger to Shatanika, wore invincible and firm armour that was constructed well. The king of Matsya wore impenetrable armour, adorned with a hundred suns, a hundred circles, a hundred dots and a hundred eyes. There were one hundred lotuses and *sougandhikas*¹⁴ embossed on Suryadatta’s armour, plated with gold and as bright as the sun. Virata’s eldest son, the brave maharatha Shankha, wore shining armour made out of iron, with one hundred eyes embossed on it. There were hundreds of maharathas armoured in this way. Armed and ready to fight, they looked like gods. Their chariots were bright and large and had been prepared well. Each of the maharathas yoked horses with golden harnesses to their respective chariots. Matsya’s glorious standard was raised on his golden and divine chariot, resplendent like the sun and the moon. There were many other pennants of different types, adorned in gold. The brave kshatriyas affixed them to their respective chariots.

‘Then the king of Matsya spoke to his younger brother Shatanika. “In my view, there is no doubt that Kanka, Ballava, the one in charge of the cows,¹⁵ and the brave Damagranthi will fight. Give them chariots with flags and pennants. They should have colourful armour, both firm and malleable. Let them wear these on their bodies and give them weapons. Those men have the bodies of brave ones, like the trunks of kings of elephants. It is my view that they have never refused to fight.” Having heard the king’s words, Shatanika, whose understanding was swift, followed the king’s instructions and gave chariots to the Parthas—Sahadeva, the king,¹⁶ Bhima and Nakula. Those charioteers placed devotion to the king in the forefront and happily yoked the chariots that had been given by the lord of men. Their deeds were unsullied and they donned the colourful armour, both firm and malleable, that had been given by Virata. Those scorchers of enemies donned them on their bodies and were armed. All of them were skilled in fighting and swift, but were still in disguise. Those bulls among the Kurus followed Virata—the four brave Pandava brothers, with truth as their valour. There were terrible mad elephants, musth strewing down their temples. They were sixty years old, with well-formed tusks, and were like monsoon clouds. They had skilled riders as mounts, trained in elephants, and these followed the king, like moving mountains. The foremost and skilled among the followers of Matsya were obedient and happy. They had eight thousand chariots, one thousand elephants and sixty thousand horses, and advanced. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O great king! As it emerged, Virata’s beautiful army was resplendent and followed the footprints of the cattle. Virata’s army were splendid. There were firmly armed infantry and a large number of elephants, horses and chariots.’

627(31)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Emerging from the city, the brave and armed ones arranged themselves in battle formations. The Matsyas encountered the Trigartas when the sun had gone down. The Trigartas and the Matsyas

were powerful and irrepressible in battle. The immensely strong ones roared at each other in anger, eager to grasp the cattle. Brave ones, skilled in handling elephants, were ascended on elephants and goaded them with spikes and hooks. There ensued a terrible and tumultuous fight, which made the body hair stand up. O king! As the sun went down, it was like that between the gods and the asuras. Dust arose from the ground and nothing could be seen. Covered with dust raised by the soldiers, birds fell down on the ground. The sun disappeared behind the thick shower of arrows that were released. The firmament was ablaze, as if with fireflies. The bows of the archers were plated with gold. Those brave ones in the world shot with the right hand and the left and were smitten down. Chariots fought with chariots and infantry with infantry. Cavalry fought with cavalry and elephants with mighty elephants. O king! As they engaged in battle, they struck each other with swords, sharp spears, lances, spikes and javelins. The brave ones possessed arms that were like clubs. They struck each other in that battle, but the brave ones were unable to vanquish the enemy heroes. Severed heads could be seen, covered with dust, with mangled lips, but with the noses intact, ornamented and adorned with earrings and with the hair dressed. In that great battle, the bodies of kshatriyas could be seen there, shattered into many parts by the arrows, resembling the trunks of shala trees. The earth was covered with heads wearing earrings and smeared with sandalwood, like the bodies of serpents. The earth was covered with dust and the flow of blood made this subside. But the terrible and dreadful combat went on, without any restraint.

‘Shatanika killed one hundred. Vishalaksha killed four hundred.¹⁷ Those maharathas penetrated the large army of the Trigartas. They engaged in hand to hand, hair to hair and nail to nail combat. On noticing the collection of chariots of the Trigartas, they penetrated with Suryadatta at the front and Madirashva at the back.¹⁸ Virata destroyed five hundred chariots in that battle. He killed hundreds of horses and five maharathas. Following different routes, that leader of charioteers penetrated that mass of chariots, until he encountered Susharma of Trigarta, mounted on a

golden chariot, in that field of battle. Those two great-souled and immensely strong ones struck each other, roaring at each other like bulls in a pen of cows. Those charioteers circled each other on chariots. They swiftly discharged arrows, like clouds unleashing torrents of rain. Intolerant and angry, skilled in use of weapons, they attacked each other with sharp arrows, swords, lances and clubs. Then the king pierced Susharma with ten arrows and each of his four horses with five arrows each. But Susharma was irrepressible in battle and supreme in use of weapons. He struck the king of the Matsyas with fifty sharp arrows. In the evening, with everything covered in dust, the soldiers of the king of Matsya and Susharma could not see each other.'

628(32)

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The world was then covered in darkness and dust. The warriors paused for an instant, without breaking the battle formations. Then the moon arose, dispelling the darkness. It made the night clear and gladdened the kshatriyas engaged in battle. When everything could be seen, the battle resumed. It assumed a terrible form and they could not see each other. Susharma of Trigarta, and his younger brother, rushed at the king of Matsya and surrounded him from all sides with chariots. Descending from their chariots, those bulls among the kshatriyas, grasped clubs in their hands and dashed towards the horses.¹⁹ The powerful ones were angry and attacked each other with clubs, swords, battleaxes and sharp arrows that had fine and yellow tips.²⁰ Having vanquished all the forces of the king of Matsya with his army, Susharma, the lord of Trigarta, skilfully defeated Matsya and rushed at the great-spirited Virata. He separately killed the horses and the charioteers who were on both sides. With the king of Matsya having lost his chariot, he²¹ captured him alive. Susharma molested him, like one driven by lust acting towards a weeping bride. He made him ascend his own chariot and departed with his swift steeds.

‘Virata was supremely strong. But he was bereft of his chariot and was captured. The Matsyas, oppressed by the Trigartas, were frightened and fled. On seeing that they were terrified, Yudhishtira, Kunti’s son, spoke to the mighty-armed Bhimasena, the destroyer of enemies. “Susharma of Trigarta has captured the king of the Matsyas. O mighty-armed one! Free him, so that he does not fall into the clutches of the enemy. All of us have lived happily in his house. All our wishes have been met and we have been honoured well. O Bhimasena! You must act thus and free us of the debt we owe him for our dwelling there.” Bhimasena replied, “O king! On your instructions, I will free him. Behold my extremely great deed when I fight with the enemies. Resorting to the strength of your arms, stand here, on one side, together with our brothers. Witness my valour now. This gigantic tree stands here, with a well-formed trunk that is like a club. I will uproot it and drive away the enemies.” On seeing that his brave brother was glancing at the tree, like an angry elephant, Dharmaraja Yudhishtira spoke to him. “O Bhima! Do not act rashly. Let the tree stand there. You should not perform such superhuman deeds with a tree. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! People will then recognize you to be Bhima. Get hold of some other weapon that is used by men—a bow, or a spear, a sword or a battleaxe. O Bhima! Grasp a weapon used by humans and free the lord of the earth, so that you are not noticed by others. The immensely strong twins will guard your wheels. O son!²² Thus, arrayed in battle formation, free the king of Matsya.” Then all of them goaded their horses. Using divine weapons, they impatiently attacked the Trigartas. On seeing that the Pandavas were returning on their chariots, Virata’s large army took heart again. They were extremely enraged and performed wonderful deeds in battle.

‘Yudhishtira, Kunti’s son, killed one thousand. Bhima made seven hundred others see the world hereafter. Nakula killed seven hundred with his arrows and the powerful Sahadeva killed three hundred heroes. O bull among men! Following Yudhishtira’s orders, those bulls among men, destroyed that large army of Trigarta. Maharatha King Yudhishtira swiftly rushed at Susharma and showered him with arrows. Susharma was

extremely enraged and impatiently pierced Yudhishtira with nine arrows and his horses with four. O king! Then Vrikodara, Kunti's son, approached Susharma and destroyed his horses. Having killed the warriors stationed at the rear with supreme arrows, he angrily brought down the charioteer from the chariot. The brave one who protected his²³ wheels was famous by the name of Shonashva. He was frightened on seeing that Trigarta had been robbed of his chariot. Then Virata descended from Susharma's chariot. Grasping his²⁴ club, he powerfully attacked him. Though he was old, with a club in his hand, he attacked him like one who was young. Bhima, terrible in form and wearing earrings, jumped down from his chariot and grasped the king of Trigarta, like a lion grasping small deer. Bereft of his chariot, maharatha Trigarta was thus grasped. All of Trigarta's soldiers were afflicted by fear and dispersed.

‘After Susharma had been defeated, the immensely strong sons of Pandu retrieved all the cattle and got back all the riches. They had the strength of their own arms. They were humble. They were rigid in their vows. They happily spent the night amidst the forefront of that army. The maharatha Kounteyas had displayed superhuman courage and Virata showed them homage and honoured them with riches. Virata said, “All these jewels are yours, just as they are mine. All of you perform the tasks you wish to. Do what you wish, in accordance with what brings you happiness. O destroyers of enemies! I will give you bejewelled maidens and many riches and whatever else comes to your mind. It is because of your prowess that I have been freed today and am safe. Therefore, you are now lord of the Matsyas and of everything else.” All the Kouravas,²⁵ with Yudhishtira at the forefront, separately showed their homage to Matsya and, hands joined in salutation, said, “O lord of the earth! We are delighted with everything that you have said. It is a matter of satisfaction to us that you have now been freed from your enemies.” The king of Matsya, mighty-armed Virata and supreme among kings, was extremely pleased and again told Yudhishtira, “Come. I will instate you as the king of Matsya. O destroyer of enemies! I will give you everything that your mind desires—gems, cattle, gold, jewels and pearls. You deserve everything. O

Vaiyaghrapadya! O Indra among brahmanas!²⁶ I show you homage in every way. It is because of you that I am now alive and am able to see my kingdom and children. The enemy, who caused me violence, is now within my powers.” Then Yudhishtira again spoke to Matsya, “O Matsya! We welcome the pleasant words that you have uttered. Always resort to non-violence and be extremely happy always. O king! Let messengers go to your city to announce the pleasant news of your victory to your well-wishers.” At these words, the king of Matsya instructed his emissaries, “Go to the city and announce my victory in battle. Let the princes be ornamented and let them come out of the city. Let there be musical instruments. Let all the courtesans adorn themselves.” They went to the city that very night. At the time of sunrise, the messengers announced Virata’s triumph.’

629(33)

Vaishampayana said, ‘After Matsya followed Trigarta to recover his animal, Duryodhana and his advisers invaded Virata’s kingdom. Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripa who was supremely skilled in weapons, Drona’s son,²⁷ Soubala, the lord Duhshasana, Vivimshati, Vikarna, the valorous Chitrasena, Durmukha, Duhsaha and other maharathas invaded King Virata’s kingdom of Matsya. They swiftly captured the cattle stations and plundered the riches of cattle. Encircling them on every side with a large collection of chariots, the Kurus seized sixty thousand cows. The cowherds were killed by those maharathas in that terrible encounter and a great lamentation arose. The chief of the cowherds was terrified. In great affliction, he quickly mounted a chariot and left for the city. Entering the city, he went to the king’s residence. Descending swiftly from the chariot, he entered and recounted what had happened.

‘He saw Matsya’s insolent son, named Bhuminjaya, there. He told him everything about how the animals of the kingdom had been plundered. “The Kurus are taking away sixty thousand cows. Cattle bring prosperity to the kingdom. Arise and bring them back. O prince! If you have our

welfare in mind, swiftly march out yourself. King Matysa left you in charge of the empty kingdom. In the midst of the courtiers, that lord of men takes pride in you. ‘My son is like me. He is brave and is an extender of the lineage. He is a warrior who is skilled in the use of arrows and weapons. My son is always courageous.’ Make those words of that Indra among men come true. O supreme among those who possesses animals! Restrain the Kurus and recover the animals. Burn them down with your terrible shafts and energetic arrows. Unleash arrows with golden shafts, with smooth tufts, from your bow. Destroy the enemies, like the leader of a herd of elephants. Your bow is like a veena, the string is the chord. The handle is the base. The loops are the two blocks at the end. The arrows are the notes and strike them in the midst of the enemies. Your steeds are as white as silver. Let them be yoked to the chariot. O lord! Your pennant has the emblem of a golden lion. Let it be raised. Your arrows have golden shafts. They are smooth at the tip. Let them be released from your skilful hands and they will overshadow these kings like the sun and reduce their lives. Defeat all the Kurus in battle, like the wielder of the vajra²⁸ against the asuras. Having attained great fame, return again to the city. You are the son of the lord of Matsya. You are the supreme refuge of the kingdom. Let all of us who reside in the kingdom find refuge in you today.” Having been thus addressed by these terrible words in the midst of the women, he²⁹ proudly spoke these words in the inner quarters.’

630(34)

‘Uttara said, “I wield a firm bow and I will today follow the footprints of the cattle, but only if someone skilled in horses becomes my charioteer. But I do not know of any man who can drive me. Swiftly look for a charioteer who can drive me out. My charioteer was killed in the great battle that lasted for twenty-eight nights, if not for an entire month. As soon as I find another man who is skilled in knowledge of horses, I will quickly ride out, with my giant standard raised. I will enter the ranks of the enemy army, with its many elephants, horses and chariots. The Kurus

will be defeated through the valour of my weapons and power and I will bring back the animals. In battle, I will terrify Duryodhana, Shantanu's son,³⁰ Vaikartana Karna, Kripa, Drona and his son³¹ and all the other great archers who have assembled, like the wielder of the vajra against the danavas. I will bring back the animals in an instant. Finding that the kingdom is deserted, the Kurus are taking away the riches of cattle. What can I possibly do if I am not there? Today, the assembled Kurus will witness my valour. 'Is it Partha Arjuna himself who is vanquishing us?'"³²

Vaishampayana said, 'He repeatedly spoke these words in the presence of the women and Panchali could not tolerate his reference to Bibhatsu.³³ In the midst of the women, the ascetic one approached him. With a bashful expression, she softly spoke these words. "This extremely handsome youth is known by the name of Brihannada and resembles a gigantic elephant. He has been Partha's charioteer. He was the great-souled one's disciple and was not inferior to him in the use of the bow. O brave one! I have seen him earlier, when I dwelt with the Pandavas. When the conflagration of the fire burnt down the great Khandava,³⁴ it is he who drove Arjuna's supreme steeds. With him as charioteer, Partha conquered all the beings in Khandavaprastha. There is no other charioteer like him. O brave one! Your maiden sister has beautiful hips and there is no doubt that he will follow her orders. If he becomes your charioteer, there is no doubt that you will vanquish all the Kurus and return swiftly with the cattle." On being thus addressed by Sairandhri, he spoke to his sister. "O one with the unblemished limbs! Go and bring Brihannada here." Thus sent by her brother, she quickly went to the dancing hall where the mighty-armed Pandava lived, hidden in his disguise.'

631(35)

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! On seeing his friend, the large-eyed princess, he³⁵ smiled and asked her why she had come. Approaching that bull among men, in the midst of her friends, the princess affectionately

spoke these words. “O Brihannada! The kingdom’s cattle are being robbed by the Kurus. My archer brother is leaving to defeat them. But not long ago, the charioteer of his chariot was slain in battle. There is no other charioteer who is equal to him as a charioteer. O Brihannada! While he was looking for a charioteer, Sairandhri spoke to him about your skill in handling horses. O Brihannada! Be good enough to act as a charioteer for my brother, before the Kurus drive our cattle too far away. If you do not act in accordance with the request I am affectionately making to you, I will give up my life today.” At these words of his friend, the one with the beautiful hips, the scorcher of enemies went to the prince, like a maddened elephant. The large-eyed one followed him, like an elephant calf following a she-elephant.

‘On seeing him from a distance, the prince spoke to him. “With you as a charioteer, Partha satisfied the fire god in Khandava. Dhananjaya, Kunti’s son, conquered the entire earth. Sairandhri knows the Pandavas and spoke to me about you. O Brihannada! Drive my horses too, when I fight with the Kurus and recover our riches of cattle. In earlier times, you were Arjuna’s favourite charioteer. It is with your aid that the bull among Pandavas conquered the earth.” Having been thus addressed by the prince, Brihannada replied, “What capacity do I possess to be a charioteer in a field of battle? Singing, dancing, or the playing of a musical instrument would have been different. I can do that. O fortunate one! How can I drive a chariot?” Uttara said, “O Brihannada! You will become a singer or a dancer again. Swiftly ascend the chariot and control these supreme horses.” Pandava, the scorcher of enemies, knew everything. But before Uttara, he committed mistakes in jest. He donned the armour upside down on his body. The large-eyed maidens laughed when they saw this. On seeing him thus confused, Uttara himself fastened the expensive armour on Brihannada. He himself donned superb armour that was as dazzling as the sun. Having raised a pennant with a lion, he instructed him to be the charioteer. The brave one had Brihannada as his charioteer and rode out, with expensive bows and many beautiful arrows.

‘Uttara³⁶ and the other maidens who were her friends told him, “O Brihannada! When you have defeated the Kurus, led by Bhishma and Drona, in battle, you must bring back many beautiful dresses for our dolls, colourful and fine.” Partha, descendant of the Pandu lineage, smilingly replied in words that were like the rumbling of the clouds, “If Uttara vanquishes those maharathas in battle, I will bring back divine and beautiful garments for you.” Having spoken these words, brave Bibhatsu drove the chariot towards the Kurus, who had many kinds of flags and pennants.’

632(36)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having emerged from the capital, Virata’s son, Prithivinjaya,³⁷ told his charioteer, “Go where the Kurus are. Having defeated all the Kurus who have assembled in search of victory and having quickly recovered the cattle, I will return to my city again.” Then the descendant of the Pandu lineage goaded those excellent steeds. Urged by that lion among men, those horses, which were as fleet as the wind and were bedecked in golden garlands, carried them, as if they seemed to touch the sky. Having travelled a short distance, Matsya’s son and Dhananjaya, the destroyers of enemies, beheld the powerful Kuru army. They approached the Kurus near a cremation ground. They saw the gigantic army, which made a sound like that of the ocean and was like a forest with many trees crawling through the sky. O supreme among men! The kings saw the dust swirling around, making it difficult for beings to see and extending up to the sky. The giant army was full of elephants, horses and chariots. It was protected by Karna, Duryodhana, Kripa and Shantanu’s son,³⁸ and by the intelligent and great archer Drona, together with his son.³⁹

‘On seeing this, Virata’s son was frightened and his body hair stood up. He told Partha, “I cannot fight with the Kurus. On seeing them, my body hair is standing up. There are many terrible warriors, impossible for even the gods to vanquish. I cannot repulse the Kuru soldiers, who seem to

stretch to eternity. I cannot enter the army of the Bharatas, with its terrible bows, large numbers of chariots, elephants and horses, and full of infantry and flags. On seeing the enemy in the battlefield, my soul has begun to tremble. Drona, Bhishma, Kripa, Karna, Vivimshati, Ashvatthama, Vikarna, Somadatta, Bahlika and brave King Duryodhana, supreme among charioteers, are there. There are many other radiant and great archers, all skilled in fighting. On seeing the Kurus, armed and arranged in battle formation, my body hair has begun to stand up and I have been overcome with lassitude.” On saying this, the stupid one wished to return and lamented foolishly before Savyasachi, who did not withdraw. “My father has gone to fight with the Trigartas and has left me alone in charge. He has taken all the soldiers and I have no soldiers. I am alone against many and I am only a child. They are skilled in weapons and possess experience. I cannot fight with them. O Brihannada! Return.” Arjuna replied, “You are miserable from fear. Why are you increasing the delight of your enemies? The enemies haven’t yet done anything against you in the battlefield. You yourself told me to take you towards the Kouravas. I will take you to the place where there are many flags flying. O mighty-armed one! I will take you to the midst of the Kurus, who are assassins⁴⁰ and like vultures looking for flesh, even if they fight from inside the earth. You boasted of your manliness before women and men, before we set out. Why do you not wish to fight? O brave one! If you return home without having recovered the cattle, all the men and women will laugh at you. Sairandhri praised me because of my deeds as a charioteer. I will not be able to return to the city without having recovered the cattle. Sairandhri praised me and you ordered me. Why should I not fight with all the Kurus? Be steadfast.” Uttara said, “Let the Kurus rob many riches from the Matsyas, as they wish. O Brihannada! Let men and women laugh at me.” Having spoken these words, the evil-souled one jumped down from the chariot. Sporting earrings, he abandoned his pride and threw away his bow and arrows.

‘Brihannada said, “Running away has never been said to be the dharma of brave kshatriyas. Dying in battle is superior to running away in fear.” Speaking these words, Kounteya Dhananjaya descended from that supreme

chariot. He pursued the prince who was running away. His long braid trailed and his red garment fluttered. On seeing him run with his trailing braid and not knowing that it was Arjuna, some soldiers laughed on seeing his strange form. But on seeing him run swiftly, the Kurus said, “Who is disguised in this form, like a fire beneath ashes? He seems to be partly a man and partly a woman. Though he is in the form of a eunuch, he seems to resemble Arjuna. He has the same head and neck, and arms like clubs. His gait is also the same. This can be no one other than Dhananjaya. Dhanajaya is to men what the lord of the gods⁴¹ is to the immortals. Who in this world, other than Dhananjaya, will come alone to fight with us? Virata left a single son in that deserted city. He has ventured forth because of his childish folly, not because of his manliness. That must be Partha Arjuna who is running there in disguise. Uttara made him his charioteer when he emerged from the city. It seems to us, having seen our flags, he is frightened and is running away. It must certainly be Dhananjaya who is running after him to restrain him.” Individually, all the Kurus thought in this way. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But having seen the Pandava in disguise, they were unable to arrive at any definite conclusion. Meanwhile, Dhananjaya ran after Uttara. Within one hundred steps, he seized him by the hair.

‘Seized by Arjuna, Virata’s son began to lament in many piteous words, as if he had been sorely oppressed. “I will give you a hundred nishkas made out of pure gold.⁴² I will give you eight sparkling *vaidurya*⁴³ gems set in gold. I will give you a chariot with a golden standard, drawn by well-trained horses and ten mad elephants. O Brihannada! Let me go.” While the insensate one was lamenting in these words, the tiger among men laughed and brought him to the chariot. Partha spoke to the frightened one, who had lost his senses. “O destroyer of enemies! If you are incapable of fighting with the foes, control the horses while I fight with the enemy. Protected by the strength of my arms, let us penetrate this unassailable and terrible mass of chariots, protected by heroes who are maharathas. O foremost among princes! O scorcher of enemies! Do not be afraid. You are a kshatriya. I will fight with the Kurus and recover your animals. Enter

that impenetrable and unassailable mass of chariots. O best among men! Be my charioteer while I fight with the Kurus.” O bull among the Bharata lineage! Having thus spoken to Virata’s son, the unvanquished Bibhatsu reassured Uttara for an instant. Then Partha, supreme among warriors, made the unwilling and insensate one, oppressed by fear, ascend the chariot.’

633(37)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On seeing that bull among men ascend the chariot in the form of a eunuch and head for the shami tree, after having made Uttara ascend the chariot, the supreme charioteers among the Kurus, with Bhishma and Drona at the front, were all agitated in their minds out of fear of Dhananjaya. On seeing them lose their endeavour and on witnessing extraordinary omens, the preceptor Bharadvaja,⁴⁴ supreme among wielders of weapons, said, “Violent and turbulent winds are blowing, rough and harsh in tone. The sky is covered in a darkness that has the complexion of ashes. The clouds are extraordinary to look at, with a rough hue. Many weapons are coming out of their sheaths. Jackals are lamenting and the directions are ablaze with a terrible light. The horses are shedding tears. The flags are fluttering, though there is nothing to move them. Since many such portents can be seen, be steadfast, because a great battle must be near. Protect yourselves and arrange yourselves in battle formations. Wait for a slaughter and protect the wealth of cattle. This is a brave and mighty archer, supreme among those who are skilled in all weapons. There is no doubt that it is Partha who has arrived in the form of a eunuch. This is the valorous Partha, Savyasachi, the scorcher of enemies. He will not refrain from battle, even against masses of Maruts.⁴⁵ The brave one suffered difficulties in the forest and was trained by Vasava.⁴⁶ He is intolerant and there is no doubt that he will do battle. O Kouravas! I do not see a warrior who is capable of repulsing him. It is said that Partha satisfied Mahadeva⁴⁷ himself in a battle.” Karna replied, “You always belittle us by speaking about Phalgunas’ qualities. But Arjuna isn’t worth

one *kala*⁴⁸ of me or Duryodhana.” Duryodhana said, “O Radheya!⁴⁹ If it is Partha, my task will be accomplished. Once recognized, they will have to roam again for another twelve years. Or if it is some other man in the form of a eunuch, I will soon bring him down to ground with extremely sharp arrows.” When Dhritarashtra’s son, scorcher of enemies, spoke these words, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Drona’s son honoured his manliness.’

634(38)

Vaishampayana said, ‘On reaching the shami tree, Partha told Virata’s son, whom he knew to be extremely delicate and not experienced in battle, “O Uttara! Instructed by me, swiftly fetch my bows. Yours will not be able to withstand my strength, or bear great pressure, or strike down an elephant, or sustain the force of my arms when I defeat the enemies. O Bhuminjaya! Therefore, quickly climb this shami tree that is covered with foliage. The bows of the sons of Pandu are hidden there—Yudhishtira, Bhima, Bibhatsu and the twins, as well as the flags, the arrows and the divine armour of those brave ones. There is also Partha’s extremely mighty bow, Gandiva. This is capable of extending the kingdom and is alone the equal of one hundred thousand others. It is capable of withstanding exertions. It is as large as the king of grass.⁵⁰ It is the equal of all weapons and creates destruction among enemies. It is embellished with gold, divine, smooth, broad and without any blemishes. It can withstand heavy pressure. It is terrible and beautiful to look at. All the other bows are equally powerful and firm.” Uttara replied, “It has been heard that a corpse is tied to this tree. I am a prince. How can I touch it with my hands? I have been born in the kshatriya lineage and that does not befit me. I am a great prince who knows about mantras and sacrifices. O Brihannada! If I touch it, my body will become as polluted as that of a bearer of corpses. How can you ask me to touch it and become the subject of condemnation?” Brihannada said, “O Indra among kings! You may become the subject of condemnation, but you will remain clean. Do not be frightened. There are bows here and no corpses. You are spirited and have been born as the heir to the Matsya

lineage. O son of a king! Why should I ask you to perform a reprehensible act?” Thus addressed by Partha, Virata’s son, adorned in earrings, descended from the chariot and reluctantly climbed the shami tree.

‘Dhananjaya, the destroyer of enemies, remained on the chariot and instructed him from there. “Remove the covers quickly.” He removed the covers from every side and saw Gandiva and the other four bows. Having been freed, the bows were as resplendent as the rays of the sun. A divine radiance glowed, like the planets at the time of their risings. On seeing their forms, like sighing snakes, his body hair stood up and he was terrified for an instant. He then touched those radiant and giant bows. O king! Virata’s son spoke these words to Arjuna.

‘Uttara asked, “This supreme bow is worth a thousand crores of gold. It is embossed with one hundred golden eyes. Whom does it belong to? This supreme bow has excellent sides and is easy to hold. Its back shines with golden and tusked elephants. Whom does it belong to? The back of this supreme bow is embellished with sixty fireflies set in patterns made out of pure gold. Whom does it belong to? This supreme bow is dazzling in its lustre. The rays of three golden suns decorate it. Whom does it belong to? This supreme bow is adorned with gold and jewels and is decorated with golden locusts made out of pure gold. Whom does it belong to? These one thousand iron arrows are borne by feathers. They have gold and silver tips and are in golden quivers. Whom do they belong to? These large arrows are broad. They have the feathers of vultures and have been sharpened on stone. These arrows are completely made out of iron and are yellow, like the colour of turmeric. They have excellent tips. Whom do they belong to? This black quiver has the marks of five tigers and the ears of sows. It holds ten arrows. Whom does it belong to? These seven hundred arrows wish to drink blood. They are large and long and are entirely made out of copper. Whom do they belong to? These arrows have the feathers of parrots and the lower halves are well made. The upper halves are made of iron and have yellow embellishments made of gold. They have been sharpened on stone. Whom do these belong to? This long sword has a stone at the tip and stones at the back. It is in a large and excellent scabbard made out of

tiger skin, decorated in golden patterns and tinkling with bells. Whom does this large sword belong to? This divine sword is without blemishes and has a golden hilt. Whom does it belong to? This unblemished sword is in a scabbard made out of cow skin. Whom does it belong to? It has been made out of gold in the country of the *nishadhas* and is capable of bearing a great weight. This sword with a golden hilt is in a scabbard made out of the skin of an animal with five nails.⁵¹ It is excellent in form and is yellow like the sky. Whom does it belong to? This yellow and heavy sword is in a golden scabbard that is made out of molten gold and has the complexion of the fire. It is supreme and without blemishes. Whom does it belong to? O Brihannada! I am asking you. Tell me exactly. I have become overcome with great and extreme wonder at witnessing all these things.”

‘Brihannada said, “The one you have asked about first is Partha’s bow Gandiva, famous in the worlds and capable of destroying enemy armies. It is supreme among all weapons and is embellished with pure gold. This is Arjuna’s supreme weapon. It is equal to one hundred thousand others and is the extender of kingdoms. Using this, Partha defeated gods and men in battle. For eternity, gods, danavas and gandharvas have worshipped it. Brahma held it earlier, for one thousand years. Then Prajapati held it for five hundred and three years,⁵² Shakra for eighty-five, King Soma for five hundred and Varuna for a hundred years. Partha, borne by white steeds, has possessed it for sixty-five years. This supreme bow is extremely powerful and greatly divine. It is supreme in its resplendent form and is honoured by gods and mortals. That bow, with the golden grip and excellent sides, is Bhimasena’s. Using this, Partha,⁵³ the scorcher of enemies, conquered the entire eastern direction. O son of Virata! This supreme bow, with the handsome grip and decorated with fireflies, belongs to King Yudhishtira. The one on which radiant and golden suns blaze, resplendent with energy, is Nakula’s weapon. The one that is embellished with golden locusts is the bow of Madri’s son, Sahadeva. O son of Virata! These thousand arrows are as sharp as razors and are feathered. These arrows are like the venom of snakes and belong to Arjuna. Their energy blazes in battle and they are swift. When the warrior unleashes them in battle against enemies, they are

not exhausted. These sharp arrows destroy enemies and belong to Bhima. They are broad and long and have the form of crescent moons. These arrows are yellow and have golden shafts and belong to Nakula. They have been sharpened on stone and are in a quiver that has the marks of five tigers. With this quiver, Madri's intelligent son conquered the entire western direction in battle. These arrows that are as radiant as the sun and are throughout made of iron, belong to the intelligent Sahadeva. They are decorated and are capable of performing action. These great arrows are sharp, yellow, long-shafted and broad and belong to the king.⁵⁴ They have golden tufts and three joints. This long sword has the mark of a bee in the front and at the rear. It is firm and is capable of withstanding great burdens. It was used by Arjuna in battle. This extremely large sword has a sheath that is made of tiger skin and belongs to Bhimasena. It is divine and is capable of withstanding great burdens. It causes terror among enemies. This supreme sword has a golden hilt and belongs to the intelligent Kourava Dharmaraja. It has an excellent blade and quiver. This firm sword is capable of withstanding great burdens and belongs to Nakula. It is colourful and is in a sheath made out of the skin of an animal with five nails.⁵⁵ This giant sword is in a sheath that is made out of the skin of a cow and belongs to Sahadeva. It is firm and is capable of withstanding all burdens.”

635(39)

‘Uttara said, “These weapons of the great-souled Parthas, who are swift in their deeds, are decorated in gold and are resplendent in their beauty. But where are Partha Arjuna and Kouravya Yudhishtira, Nakula, Sahadeva and Pandava Bhimasena? All of them are great-souled and are capable of destroying all enemies. But after they lost their kingdom in the game of dice, nothing has been heard about them. Where is the famous Panchali Droupadi, a jewel among women? After they were defeated in the game of dice, Krishna followed them into the forest.”

‘Arjuna replied, “I am Partha Arjuna. The gamester is Yudhishtira. Ballava, who cooks dishes for your father, is Bhimasena. Nakula is the one who tends to the steeds and Sahadeva is with the cattle. Know that Sairandhri, because of whom the Kichakas were slain, is Droupadi.”

‘Uttara said, “I have heard ten names of Partha⁵⁶ earlier. I will have faith in your words if you can recount all of them to me.”

‘Arjuna replied, “I will tell you my ten names—Arjuna, Phalguna, Jishnu, Kiriti, Shvetavahana, Bibhatsu, Vijaya, Krishna, Savyasachi and Dhananjaya.”

‘Uttara asked, “Why are you named Vijaya? Why are you Shvetavahana? Why is your name Kiriti? Why are you Savyasachi? Why are you Arjuna, Phalguna, Jishnu, Krishna, Bibhatsu and Dhananjaya? Tell me everything in detail. I have heard the reasons why the brave one obtained those names.”

‘Arjuna replied, “I have conquered all the countries and obtained all their wealth. I stand in the midst of riches. That is the reason I am known as Dhananjaya.⁵⁷ When I go out to fight against those who are indomitable in battle, I never return without vanquishing them. That is the reason I am known as Vijaya.⁵⁸ When I fight in battle, white steeds with golden harnesses are yoked to my chariot. That is the reason I am Shvetavahana.⁵⁹ I was born on the slopes of the Himalayas when the two *nakshatras* of Purva and Uttara Phalguni were in the firmament.⁶⁰ That is the reason I am known as Phalguna. In earlier times, when I fought with the bulls among the danavas, Shakra gave me a diadem, as radiant as the sun, for my head. That is the reason I am Kiriti.⁶¹ I have never committed a terrible act in battle. Therefore, I am known among gods and men as Bibhatsu.⁶² Both my hands are right hands when I draw the Gandiva. Therefore, I am known among gods and men as Savyasachi.⁶³ My complexion is rare on this earth with its four corners. I perform pure deeds and that is the reason I am known as Arjuna.⁶⁴ I am difficult to reach. I cannot be repressed and I do the repressing. I am the son of the chastiser of Paka.⁶⁵ That is the reason I am famous among gods and men as

Jishnu.⁶⁶ Affectionately, my father gave me my tenth name of Krishna, since the child had a dark complexion.”⁶⁷

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Virata’s son showed his homage to Partha and said, “My name is Bhuminjaya and I am also known as Uttara. It is my good fortune that I have beheld Partha. O Dhananjaya! You are welcome. O red-eyed one! O mighty-armed one! O one with arms like the trunks of a king among elephants! You should pardon me for what I have said out of ignorance. You have earlier performed many wonderful and difficult deeds. I have now overcome my fears and I feel great affection towards you.”’

636(40)

‘Uttara said, “O brave one! Ascend this large chariot with me as the charioteer. Which of the armies would you like to attack? As instructed by you, I will take you there.”

‘Arjuna replied, “O tiger among men! I am pleased that you no longer have any fear. O one who is skilled in battle! I will disperse all of your enemies in battle. O immensely intelligent one! Be steady and behold me fight with the enemies. I will accomplish extremely terrible deeds. Swiftly tie all these quivers to my chariot. Take that polished sword that is embellished with gold. I will fight with the Kurus and recover your animals. Protected by my arms, this chariot of yours, with its three poles and quivers, with many flags, will be like a city protected by turrets and gates. Its sides will be guarded by my resolution. When I am angered, the twang of my bow will make the axle sound like kettle drums. I, the wielder of the Gandiva, will be established on the chariot in battle. I am incapable of being vanquished by enemy soldiers. O son of Virata! Shed all your fears.”

‘Uttara said, “I am no longer afraid of them. I know that you are steadfast in battle. I know that you are the equal of Keshava, or Indra himself, in battle. But thinking about one thing, I am overcome by confusion. It is certain that I am foolish, because I cannot arrive at any

conclusion. You have the form of a brave one and bear all the auspicious marks. Through what adverse circumstances did you become a eunuch? You are like the wielder of the trident,⁶⁸ or a king of the gandharvas, or the god Shatakratu.⁶⁹ I think of you roaming in the attire of a eunuch.”

‘Arjuna replied, “I am telling you truthfully, I have observed this vow for a year, on the instructions of my elder brother.⁷⁰ I have observed brahmacharya. O mighty-armed one! I am not a eunuch, but united with dharma, have followed another.⁷¹ O son of a king! Know that my vow has been completed.”⁷²

‘Uttara said, “I am extremely delighted today that my conclusions have not been proved wrong. Those who are supreme among men cannot be eunuchs like these. I have now obtained an aide in battle and can fight even with the immortals. My fears have been destroyed. Tell me what I should do. I will control your horses, which are capable of vanquishing the chariots of enemies. O bull among men! I have been trained in driving a chariot by an expert. O bull among men! Know that I have been trained as a charioteer, like Daruka for Vasudeva and Matali for Shakra.⁷³ The horse that is yoked to the right of the pole is like Sugriva and when his feet touch the ground, they can hardly be seen.⁷⁴ I think that the other beautiful horse that is yoked to the left of the pole is like Meghapushpa in its speed. I think that the beautiful horse with the golden harness that is yoked to the left of the axle is superior in strength and speed to Sainya. I think that the one that is yoked to the right of the axle is superior in strength and speed to Balahaka. This chariot is capable of bearing an archer like you in battle. While stationed on this chariot, it is my view that you will be able to fight.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘The brave and strong one⁷⁵ took the bracelets off from his arms. He donned beautiful wrist guards that would sound like drums. He tied his black and curly hair in a white garment. He swiftly strung Gandiva and drew the bow. When the bow was drawn, it uttered a great sound, as if a giant rock had been dashed against another rock. The earth trembled and a turbulent wind began to blow. The birds were

confused in the sky. The giant trees began to tremble. From the sound that was like the roar of thunder, the Kurus got to know that Arjuna was on the chariot and was drawing the best of bows with his arms.'

637(41)

Vaishampayana said, 'Having made Uttara his charioteer and having circumambulated the shami tree, Dhananjaya gathered all his weapons and marched out. The maharatha took down the banner with the lion and placed it below the shami tree.⁷⁶ He rode out with Uttara as the charioteer. He hoisted on the chariot the golden banner with the mark of a monkey with the tail of a lion, one created with divine illusion by Vishvakarma.⁷⁷ He thought of the favours of the fire god. Having divined his thoughts, he⁷⁸ instructed those beings to be on the flag. Maharatha Bibhatsu Kounteya Shvetavahana was established on the colourful chariot, with a flag and quivers. He donned his wrist guards and grasped his bow and arrows. With the supreme of monkeys on his banner, he set out in a northern direction. The strong one, the destroyer of enemies, blew powerfully on his deep-sounding and large conch shell and this made the body hair of his enemies stand up. At that sound, the swift horses knelt down on the ground. Uttara was terrified and sat down on the chariot. Kounteya Arjuna grasped the reins and made the horses stand up. He embraced and comforted Uttara and said, "O foremost among princes! Do not be frightened. O scorcher of enemies! You are a kshatriya. O tiger among men! Why are you despondent in the midst of the enemy? You have heard the sounds of conch shells before, as well as the loud sounds of kettle drums and the roar of elephants when they are stationed in battle formations in armies. Why are you then so frightened by the sound of the conch shell? Why is your form so despondent and why are you so terrified, as if you are an ordinary man?"

'Uttara replied, "I have heard the sounds of conch shells and the loud sounds of kettle drums, and also the roars of elephants when they are stationed in battle formations in armies. But never before, have I heard the

sound of a conch shell like this. Never before, have I seen a banner like this. Never before, have I heard the sound of a bow twanging like this. My mind is terribly agitated from the sound of this conch shell, the twang of the bow and the roar of the chariot. I have lost sense of all the directions and my heart is trembling. The banner has covered everything and the directions are no longer evident to me. The sound of the Gandiva has deafened my ears.”

‘Arjuna said, “Stand firmly on this chariot and to one side. Place your feet firmly on it. Grasp the reins firmly. I am going to blow the conch shell again.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘The earth trembled from the sound of the conch shell, the roar of the chariot and the thunder of the Gandiva.

‘Drona said, “From the roar of the chariot, the blast of the conch shell and the trembling of the earth, it can be no one other than Savyasachi. Our weapons are no longer shining and our horses have lost their spirits. Although there is kindling, the fires do not blaze. This does not augur well. All the animals are running towards the sun, wailing terribly. The crows are alighting on our standards. This does not augur well. The vultures⁷⁹ are flying towards our left and this portends great danger. The jackals are howling and running around in the midst of the army and are escaping uninjured. This portends great danger. I can see that your⁸⁰ body hair is standing up. The soldiers have already been conquered and no one wishes to fight. Their faces are pale and all the warriors have lost their senses. Let us let the cattle go. Let us stand here, armed and arranged in battle formations.”’

638(42)

Vaishampayana said, ‘In that battle, King Duryodhana then spoke to Bhishma, Drona, the tiger among charioteers, and the great maharatha Kripa. “Both Karna and I have told the preceptor this several times. I will say it again, because I am not satisfied with having spoken it earlier. When they were defeated, our pledge was that they would dwell for twelve years

in the forest and undetected for one year in any country. The thirteenth year is not yet over. Bibhatsu, who was supposed to live in disguise, has appeared before us. If Bibhatsu arrives before the period of concealment is over, the Pandavas will have to dwell again in the forest for twelve years. Their avarice may have made them forget, or we may have been confused. Bhishma should know whether they have exceeded, or fallen short of, the stipulated period. If things are not clear, there is always scope for doubt. Something that is thought of in one way, may turn out to be another. We followed the northern direction in order to fight with the army of the Matsyas. However, if Bibhatsu arrives, we cannot turn away. We came here to fight with the Matsyas, on behalf of the Trigartas. The many depredations of the Matsyas have been recounted to us. They⁸¹ sought refuge with us out of fear and we have given them our promise. The arrangement was that they would first, on the afternoon of the seventh lunar day, seize the great wealth of cattle of the Matsyas and we would again do the same at sunrise on the eighth lunar day. They may not have been able to find the cattle, or they may have been defeated. They may have deceived us and concluded an alliance with the Matsyas. Or the Matsya, together with his countrymen, may have defeated them. With his entire army, he is now advancing towards us to fight. It is possible that an extremely valorous one among them is leading the way, so as to defeat us. Or it may be Matsya himself. Whether it is the king of Matsya, or whether it is Bibhatsu, who has arrived, it is our agreement that all of us must fight. Why are our supreme charioteers, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Vikarna and Drona's son⁸² standing idly on their chariots? All of these maharathas seem to be confused at this time. There is no other option but to fight. Therefore, resolve yourselves accordingly. If, to save our cattle, we have to confront in battle the god who wields the vajra⁸³ or Yama himself, who would flee to Hastinapura? There may be doubt about the horses. But who among the foot soldiers will remain alive, even if they have been pierced by arrows and dispersed in the deserted forest?⁸⁴ Setting the preceptor aside, let us decide on the course of action. He⁸⁵ knows their⁸⁶ minds and tries to terrify us. I can perceive his special affection towards Arjuna. As

soon as he sees Bibhatsu arrive, that is the reason he praises him. Decide on a course of action so that our army is not destroyed in a foreign land, in the great forest and in the summer. Decide on a course of action so that this army is not confused and routed by the enemy. Having heard the neighing of horses, why should one praise the enemy? Horses always neigh, whether they are walking or standing. The wind always blows. Vasava⁸⁷ always showers down. The roar of the thunder can be heard many times. What does this have to do with Partha and why should he be praised? That can only be out of love towards him and hatred and anger towards us. Preceptors are indeed compassionate and wise. They can see what is wrong. But they should never be consulted when a great danger arrives. Learned ones are adornments when they recount their beautiful tales in fine palaces, assemblies and dwelling houses. Learned ones are adornments when they perform wonderful acts in assemblies of people and when sacrificial offerings have to be prepared. They know the weaknesses of others and human character. Learned ones are adornments when they point out defects in the preparation of food. But ignore learned ones when they praise the qualities of enemies. Instead, decide on a course of action so that the enemy can be killed. Let the cattle be protected. Let the soldiers immediately be arranged in battle formations. Arrange for guards in the appropriate places, so that we can fight with the enemy.”

639(43)

‘Karna said, “I see that all you honourable ones⁸⁸ are frightened and terrified. All of you do not wish to fight and are standing idly. Whether it is the king of Matsya or Bibhatsu who has come, I will restrain him, the way the shoreline holds back the abode of *makaras*.⁸⁹ Arrows with straight feathers will be shot from my bow and they will not be repulsed, like gliding snakes. They have golden tufts and are extremely sharp at the tip. Released from my hand, these arrows will cover Partha, like locusts covering a tree. These winged shafts will firmly strike against the string of the bow, and the sound of the slapping of palms will be like that of a

kettledrum. Bibhatsu has concentrated for eight and five years⁹⁰ and is fondly looking forward to a battle in which he will strike me. Kounteya, with the qualities of a brahmana, is the right receptacle to receive thousands of arrows shot by me. This great archer is famous in the worlds. O best of the Kurus! But in no way am I inferior to Arjuna. I will release these golden arrows, shafted with the feathers of vultures, and the sky will seem to be covered with fireflies. I gave my word to Dhritarashtra's son⁹¹ earlier and I will repay that debt today. I will kill Arjuna today. My feathered arrows will split the sky and envelope the directions. They will appear like locusts in the firmament. Partha's touch is like that of Indra's vajra and he is as energetic as the great Indra. But I will oppress him, the way an elephant is oppressed with flaming torches. He is as unassailable as the fire. But I will assail him with swords, spears and arrows. The flaming Pandava burns down enemies. But the force of my horses will be like a storm and the roar of my mass of chariots will be like thunder. The shower of my arrows will be like a great cloud and I will pacify Pandava. The arrows released from my bow will be like the virulent poison of snakes to Partha. Those arrows will pierce him, like serpents gliding into a termite hill. I have obtained weapons from Jamadagni's son, supreme among rishis.⁹² Using their power, I can fight with Vasava himself. With an arrow,⁹³ I will kill the monkey that is stationed on the top of his standard. It will fall down on the ground today, uttering a terrible roar. The other beings who are stationed on the enemy's flag will be tormented. Oppressed by me, they will fly in all the directions and their wails will rise up into the sky. Today I will uproot with its roots the stake that has been impaled in Duryodhana's heart for a long time. I will bring down Bibhatsu from his chariot. Today, the Kouravas will see Partha bereft of his chariot, with his horses dead and his manliness destroyed, sighing like a serpent. Let the Kurus go as they wish, taking only the riches⁹⁴ with them. Or let them be stationed on their chariots and witness my battle.”

‘Kripa said, “O Radheya! Your mind is always wicked and you are inclined towards war. You do not understand natural objectives, nor do you consider the consequences. We should think about the many courses of action that are laid down in the sacred texts. Those who are learned in the ancient accounts have said that a war is the worst. A war guarantees victory only if it is at the right time and the right place. But if it is conducted at the wrong time, it does not bring any fruits. Valour at the right place and the right time is recommended for our welfare. We must decide on a course of action in accordance with what is favourable. The learned do not gauge how much of load a chariot can take on the words of its maker. Reflecting on all this, it is not desirable for us to encounter Partha. He saved the Kurus alone and he satisfied Agni alone.⁹⁵ He alone spent five years in the pursuit of brahmacharya.⁹⁶ He was alone when he raised Subhadra onto a chariot and summoned Krishna to a duel.⁹⁷ In the forest, Krishna won back Krishna when she was being abducted.⁹⁸ He alone spent five years in Shakra’s abode, learning the use of weapons.⁹⁹ He extended the fame of the Kurus by defeating Samyamini alone.¹⁰⁰ That destroyer of enemies swiftly vanquished Chitrasena, king of the gandharvas, in a battle, together with his invincible army.¹⁰¹ In a similar way, he alone defeated the Nivatakavacha and Kalakhanja danavas, whom even the gods could not slay.¹⁰² O Karna! What act have you single-handedly performed earlier? Have you, like each of them,¹⁰³ brought lords of the earth under your sway? Even Indra himself is incapable of facing Partha in battle. He who wishes to fight with him had better take some medicine. You wish to extend your right hand and use your forefinger to pluck out a fang from an angry and virulent snake. Or while roaming alone in the forest, and without a goad,¹⁰⁴ you wish to climb onto a mad elephant and drive it into the city. Or smearing yourself with clarified butter and attired in bark, you wish to pass through a blazing fire that has been kindled with clarified butter, fat and marrow. What manliness is there in tying a giant rock around one’s neck, binding oneself, and then trying to swim across the ocean? O Karna! If one is unskilled in weapons and extremely weak, and

yet wishes to fight with Partha, who is skilled in weapons and strong, that shows foolishness. He has been deceived by us for thirteen years. He is now like a lion that has been freed from its nooses. He will destroy all of us. We have unwittingly run into Partha waiting alone, like a fire hidden in a well. We confront supreme danger. Although Partha is invincible in battle, we will fight him together when he comes upon us. Let the soldiers be armed and stationed in battle formations. O Karna! Drona, Duryodhana, Bhishma, you, Drona's son and I—all of us will fight Partha. Do not be rash. Though Partha is fierce, like the one with an upraised vajra in his hand,¹⁰⁵ if all six chariots¹⁰⁶ are united together, we will be able to repulse him. With the soldiers arranged in battle formations and with the supreme archers ready, we will fight Arjuna in battle, like the danavas against Vasava.”

641(45)

‘Ashvatthama said, “The cattle have not been conquered yet. They have not crossed the boundary. Nor have they reached Hastinapura. O Karna! Why are you boasting? Even after having won many battles, obtaining a great deal of riches and winning many enemy lands, there is no manliness in boasting. The fire burns without a word. The sun shines in silence. The earth bears its beings, mobile and immobile, in silence. The deeds of the four varnas have been laid down by the learned ones, so that they may achieve the objective of wealth without committing a sin. Having studied the Vedas, brahmanas must sacrifice and officiate at sacrifices. Kshatriyas must use the bow and sacrifice, but officiate at the sacrifices of others. Having acquired objects, vaishyas must perform deeds for the brahman.¹⁰⁷ Having obtained the earth in accordance with the sacred texts, those immensely fortunate ones behaved well towards their preceptors, even if they were devoid of qualities. What kshatriya should be satisfied at having obtained a kingdom through gambling? That is cruel and should be for other ordinary men. Having obtained riches through deceit and fraud, what wise man will boast of it, like a vendor of flesh? In which duel in battle

have you vanquished Dhananjaya, Nakula or Sahadeva? Whose riches have you robbed? Has Yudhishtira, or Bhima, supreme among strong ones, ever been defeated by you? And in which battle did you win over Krishna?¹⁰⁸ O performer of evil deeds! She was dragged into the assembly hall in a single garment, when she was in season. In search of gain, you have severed the great root of a sandalwood tree.¹⁰⁹ O brave one! You made them perform tasks and what did Vidura have to say then?¹¹⁰ We have seen that men exhibit conciliation, to the best of their ability. So do other beings, even insects and ants. The Pandavas are incapable of pardoning Droupadi's molestation. Dhananjaya has appeared for the destruction of the sons of Dhritarashtra. Appearing as a learned one, you speak your words repeatedly. But will Jishnu not end this enmity, leaving no vestiges left?¹¹¹ Kunti's son Dhananjaya is not frightened of fighting the gods, the gandharvas, the asuras or the rakshasas. When he is enraged and descends on anyone in battle, he destroys him, like a tree is brought down through Garuda's force. He is superior to you in valour. He is equal to the king of the gods¹¹² in archery. He is Vasudeva's¹¹³ equal in battle. Who will not show homage to Partha? He will fight and destroy divine¹¹⁴ with divine, human with human, weapons with other weapons. What man is Arjuna's equal? Those who know about dharma know that a student comes only after a son. That is the reason why Drona loves Pandava. Will you fight with Pandava the way you gambled and won Indraprastha and the way you dragged Krishna to the assembly hall? This wise uncle of yours, Shakuni of Gandhara,¹¹⁵ is a deceitful gambler and is learned about the dharma of kshatriyas. Let him fight here now. Gandiva does not cast dice, not *krita*, nor *dvapara*.¹¹⁶ Gandiva releases flaming, sharp and pointed arrows. When released from Gandiva, dreadful, extremely energetic and tufted with vulture feathers, they can even pierce the interiors of mountains. Antaka, Shamana, death¹¹⁷ and the fire with the mare's head¹¹⁸ leave something behind, but not an enraged Dhananjaya. Let the preceptor¹¹⁹ fight with Dhananjaya if he wishes. I will not fight with him. Our purpose

is to fight with Matsya, if he comes here, following the footprints of the cattle.””

642(46)

‘Bhishma said, “Drona’s son sees it well. Kripa sees it well. Karna wishes to fight, in accordance with the dharma of kshatriyas. No learned man can find fault with the preceptor. Considering the time and the place, it is my view that we should fight. What learned man who possesses five armed enemies, as radiant as the sun,¹²⁰ will not be confused at their ascendancy? Even men, who are conversant with dharma, are confused when it comes to their own interests. O king! That is the reason I am speaking these words, whether they please you or not. What Karna spoke, was for the purpose of inciting enterprise in us. The preceptor’s son¹²¹ should pardon us, because a great task has to be undertaken. Kounteya has arrived and this is not the time for dissension. You,¹²² the preceptor and Kripa must pardon everything. You are skilled in the use of weapons, like the sun in its radiance. Just as spots can never be removed from the moon, you have the power of brahmanas and *brahmastras* are established in you.¹²³ The four Vedas may be seen together in one place,¹²⁴ and the power of kshatriyas in another single place. We have not heard of these two together in any person, other than the preceptor of the Bharatas and his son. This is my view. Brahmastras and the Vedas are not seen together anywhere else. The preceptor’s son should forgive. This is not the time for dissension. Let us all fight in unity with the son of the chastiser of Paka,¹²⁵ who has now arrived. The learned ones have spoken about the weaknesses of an army and it is the view of the learned ones that dissension is the foremost and the worst.”

‘Ashvatthama replied, “Let the preceptor forgive and there should be peace here again. If the preceptor was insulted, that was done in anger.””

Vaishampayana said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! At that, Duryodhana asked Drona’s pardon, together with Karna, Bhishma and the great-souled Kripa.’

‘Drona said, “I have already been pacified by the words that Shantanu’s son Bhishma spoke first. We should now engage and decide on a supreme course of action so that when Duryodhana is engaged, no clouds descend on the soldiers, out of rashness or out of confusion. Dhananjaya would not have shown himself, had the period of dwelling in the forest not been over. He will not pardon us today, without having recovered the riches.¹²⁶ Let us follow a course of action so that he cannot confront and defeat the sons of Dhritarashtra in any way. O Gangeya!¹²⁷ Remember the words that Duryodhana had addressed you earlier and speak what is right.”’

643(47)

‘Bhishma said, “Parts of *kalas*, *muhurtas*,¹²⁸ days, fortnights, months, nakshatras, planets, seasons and years are joined together and the wheel of time revolves in accordance with these measurements of time. Because of an excess of time and deviations in the paths of bodies in the sky, there is an addition of two months in every cycle of five years.¹²⁹ I think that calculated in this way, during the passage of thirteen years, there are five additional months and twelve nights.¹³⁰ They have done everything that they had promised to do. Knowing this for certain, Bibhatsu has arrived. All of them are great-souled and knowledgeable about dharma and artha. They have Yudhishtira as the king. Why should they act contrary to dharma? The Kounteyas are not avaricious and they have accomplished a difficult feat. They have Yudhishtira as their king. Why should they act contrary to dharma? They do not wish to acquire the kingdom by any means possible. Else, the descendants of the Kuru lineage would have displayed their valour at that time. They are bound by the nooses of dharma and they have not deviated from the vow of kshatriyas. If there is a choice between being called untruthful and confronting defeat, the Parthas would choose death over being untruthful. But the time has now arrived. Such is the valour of those bulls among men, the Pandavas, who are protected by the wielder of the vajra, that they will not give up what is their due. We must counter in battle the supreme among those who are

skilled in weapons. Therefore, let everything be swiftly done, so that our objectives are not taken over by others, and so that the virtuous ones of the world do not think that we are against welfare. O Kourava! O Indra among kings! I have never witnessed a battle where success has been assured. Dhananjaya has arrived. When one engages in battle, there is prosperity and adversity, victory and defeat. One will confront one or the other. I have seen this without a doubt. Therefore, let us carry out the tasks that are needed for war, as long as those deeds are in conformity with dharma. Dhananjaya has arrived.”

‘Duryodhana replied, “O grandfather! I will not give the kingdom away to the Pandavas. Therefore, without any delay, let us make arrangements for the battle.”

‘Bhishma said, “If it pleases you to listen, hear what my advice is. Take one-fourth of the army and quickly leave for the city. Let another one-fourth gather the cattle and leave. We will counter Pandava with the remaining half of the army, or Matsya if he arrives again, or Shatakratu himself. Let the preceptor be stationed in the middle, with Ashvatthama on the left. Let the wise Kripa, the son of Sharadvat, protect the right flank. Karna, the armoured son of the suta, should be stationed in the front. I will station myself behind the entire army, so as to protect it.”’

644(48)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The maharatha Kouravyas thus arranged themselves in battle formations. Arjuna approached swiftly, his chariot uttering a roar. They saw the top of his standard. They heard the roar of his chariot. They heard the terrible sound of Gandiva, when it was twanged. On seeing all this, and on seeing the maharatha, the wielder of Gandiva, arrive, Drona spoke these words. “The top of the standard, which can be seen from a distance, belongs to Partha. That noise is like that of a monsoon cloud and the monkey is roaring. The best of charioteers is stationed on his chariot and he is supreme among charioteers. He draws Gandiva, the best of bows, with a sound like that of thunder. These two arrows have fallen together at my feet. These two other arrows have passed me by, touching my ears.

Having dwelt in the forest and having accomplished superhuman deeds, Partha is now honouring me and putting questions to my ears.”

‘Arjuna said, “O charioteer! Stop the horses at a place from where I can use arrows on that army, until I am able to see that wretch among the Kuru lineage¹³¹ in the midst of the soldiers. When I see that insolent one, I will ignore all the others and pounce down on his head. Then all of them will be defeated. Drona is stationed there and Drona’s son is after him.

Bhishma, Kripa and Karna, great archers, are stationed there. But I do not see the king¹³² there. He must have gathered the cattle and left. Anxious to save his life, he must have resorted to the southern road. Leaving the chariots and soldiers here, go to where Suyodhana is. O son of Virata! That is the place where I will fight, because the battle there will not be without meat. Having defeated him, I will gather the cattle and return.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘At these words, Virata’s son carefully reined the horses. He used the reins to restrain them from where the bulls among the Kurus were. He goaded the mounts in the direction towards which Duryodhana had gone. Ignoring the assembled chariots, Shvetavahana left. Drona got to know his intentions and spoke these words. “Bibhatsu does not wish to station himself here, when the king is far away. He is advancing swiftly. Let us attack his flanks. When he is enraged, no one can fight him single-handedly in battle, other than the god with the thousand eyes¹³³ and Devaki’s son Krishna. What will we do with these cattle and these great riches, if Duryodhana sinks like a boat in Partha’s water?”

Meanwhile, Bibhatsu went on and announced his name himself. He swiftly covered the soldiers with arrows that were like locusts. Because of the mass of arrows unleashed by Partha, the warriors were dispersed. They could not see the earth or the sky, because they were enveloped with arrows. They had no inclination to fight. But nor did they have an inclination to run away. In their minds, they honoured Partha’s swiftness. He then blew the conch shell that makes the body hair of enemies stand up. He drew his excellent bow and incited the beings on his flag. At the sound of the conch shell and the roar of the chariot’s wheels, and those of the inhuman beings who resided on the flag, the cattle raised their tails up

and wailed on all the sides. They returned towards the southern direction.””

645(49)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having routed the enemy’s soldiers and having conquered the cattle, Arjuna, the supreme of archers, in a desire to do that which brought him pleasure, advanced in Duryodhana’s direction. The cattle ran away towards the Matsyas. Thinking that Kiriti had been successful and seeing him advance towards Duryodhana, the foremost among the Kurus swiftly descended on him. Beholding their many soldiers, arranged in deep battle formations, with many flags, the destroyer of enemies spoke these words to Matsya Virata’s son. “Use these golden reins to swiftly drive these white horses in that direction.

Endeavour to quickly take me to where that mass of lion-like warriors is gathered. That evil-minded son of the suta wishes to fight me, like an elephant against another elephant. O prince! Duryodhana’s favours have made him insolent. Take me to him.” Using the golden reins and driving the large horses that were as swift as the wind, Virata’s son broke through that army of charioteers and bore Pandava to the middle. On seeing this, maharatha Chitrasena, Samgramajit, Shatrusaha and Jaya advanced to help Karna and countered the advancing Bharata¹³⁴ with their arrows and spears. With the flames of his bow and the scorching force of his arrows, that foremost among men burnt down the chariots of those bulls among the Kurus, like a fire consuming a forest. A terrible battle ensued.

*Atiratha*¹³⁵ Vikarna, foremost among the Kurus, fiercely attacked Partha, Bhima’s junior, from a chariot and showered down arrows on him. He¹³⁶ drew the firmly stringed bow that was embellished with the best of gold and routed Vikarna. He shattered the standard that was on his chariot. With his standard destroyed, he¹³⁷ fled. Unable to control his anger, wishing to accomplish superhuman deeds and seeing the oppression of the mass of soldiers, Shatrumtapa showered down arrows on the scorcher of enemies. He hurled the nail of a tortoise¹³⁸ at Partha. Pierced by that atiratha king

and immersed amidst the flags of the Kurus, he pierced Shatrumtapa with five swift arrows and killed his charioteer with ten. Having been pierced by that bull among the Bharatas, with an arrow that sliced through the armour on his body, the king¹³⁹ fell down dead on the ground, like a tree¹⁴⁰ dislodged from the peak of a mountain by the wind. Those brave bulls among charioteers were shattered in that battle by a braver bull among charioteers. They trembled, like a gigantic forest that shivers at the time when a gale strikes it. Those foremost young ones among men were killed by Partha. In their fine garments, they seemed to be asleep on the ground. They were the granters of riches and were like Vasava in their valour. But they were vanquished by Vasava's son in battle. They were like grown elephants from the Himalayas, clad in armour made out of iron and gold. Thus slaying the enemies on the field of battle, the wielder of the Gandiva, foremost among men, began to roam around in that battlefield in different directions. He was like a forest fire at the end of the summer. At the time of spring, the wind that blows in the sky scatters the leaves. Like that, Kiriti scattered his enemies and the atiratha roamed around on the battlefield on his chariot. Vaikartana's younger brother, spirited Samgramajit, drove red horses and he killed those steeds. With a single arrow, he sliced off his crowned head. On seeing his brother slain, Vaikartana, the suta's son, exhibited his valour, like a king of elephants displaying his tusks, or like a tiger attacking a large buffalo. Vaikartana attacked Pandava with twelve arrows. He pierced the bodies of all the horses and that of Virata's son with those arrows. It was like a king among elephants being struck by an elephant. He¹⁴¹ took out sharp arrows from his quiver and stretching the string of the bow right up to his ear, pierced the body of the suta's son with his arrows. With arrows unleashed like lightning from his bow, the destroyer of enemies pierced him in battle, in the arms, the thighs, the head, the forehead, the neck and in all the parts of the chariot. Thus wounded by the arrows shot by Partha, and scorched by Pandava's arrows, like a swift elephant that has been defeated by another elephant, Vaikartana fled from the forefront of the battle.'

Vaishampayana said, ‘After Radheya fled, the others, with Duryodhana in the lead, attacked with their respective armies and showered Pandava with arrows. On seeing those many soldiers, arranged in battle formations, attacking him with arrows, Virata’s son said, “What is your intention? O Jishnu! You are stationed on this beautiful chariot and I am your charioteer. Towards which part of the army will I advance next? I will go where you ask me to.”

‘Arjuna replied, “O Uttara! You can see the red-eyed one clad in the skin of a tiger. He is unhurt. He is stationed on a chariot with a blue flag. That is Kripa and those are his chariots and soldiers. Take me to him. I will show that firm-bowed one my dexterity in use of weapons. The one with the pure and golden water pot on his flag is the preceptor Drona himself, supreme among those who have knowledge of all weapons. O brave one! Circumambulate him cheerfully, without obstructing him in any way. That is the eternal dharma. If Drona strikes at my body first and I strike him back in return, he will not be angered. There is one who can be seen not far from him, with a bow on the top of his standard. That is the preceptor’s son, maharatha Ashvatthama. I have always honoured him, and so have all the wielders of weapons. When you encounter his chariot, restrain again and again. There is one in that mass of chariots, clad in golden armour. He is stationed, surrounded by one-third of the army. An elephant on a golden flag can be seen at the top of his standard. That is Dhritarashtra’s son, the illustrious King Suyodhana. O brave one! Take this chariot before him. He can destroy the chariots of enemies. The king is indomitable in energy and is irrepressible in battle. In swiftness in the use of weapons, he is regarded as the foremost among Drona’s pupils. But I will show him many times what it means to be swift in use of weapons in battle. The one who has a beautiful elephant’s enclosure embellished on his standard is Vaikartana Karna, whom you have known earlier.¹⁴² When you approach the chariot of that evil-souled Radheya, be careful, because he always challenges me in a battle. There is one whose flag is blue and is decorated with five stars. The brave one is stationed on his chariot, his

hands encased in guards. He has a large bow. He is stationed on his chariot and his supreme flag is decorated with stars and the sun. A white and unblemished umbrella is held aloft his head. He is at the head of a great mass of chariots, with many flags and pennants. He is like the sun stationed before a mass of clouds. His golden armour can be seen, like the moon and the sun. His golden helmet seems to trouble me. This is Shantanu's son Bhishma, a grandfather to all of us. He is blessed with royal prosperity, but obeys Duryodhana's instructions. You should approach him last, so that he does not cause an obstruction for me. When I fight with him, control the horses carefully.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘O king! Virata's son carefully drove Savyasachi to Kripa, who was ready to engage with Dhananjaya.’

647(51)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The army of the Kurus could be seen, with the foremost among archers. It moved like clouds stirred by gentle winds at the end of the summer. The horses were nearby, mounted by armed warriors. There were elephants that were terrible in form, goaded by clubs and hooks. O king! Then Shakra arrived, riding handsomely, and with the masses of gods—together with the Vishvadevas, the Ashvins and the masses of Maruts. Crowded with gods, yakshas, gandharvas and giant serpents, the cloudless sky was dazzling, as if with the planets. They had come to witness the power of their weapons, when used by humans and the terrible and great fight that was imminent between Bhishma and Arjuna. The *vimana*¹⁴³ of the king of the gods had one hundred thousand golden pillars. It possessed other gems and jewels that held up the palace. It was divine and was capable of travelling anywhere at will. It was decorated with all kinds of jewels. It was radiant in the sky. Together with Vasava, there were thirty-three gods there and gandharvas, rakshasas, snakes, ancestors and maharshis. There were the kings Vasumana, Balaksha, Supratardana, Ashtaka, Shibi, Yayati, Nahusha, Gaya, Manu, Kshupa, Raghu, Bhanu, Krishashva, Sagara and Shala. They were extremely resplendent and could be seen on the vimana of the king of the gods. Agni,

Isha, Soma, Varuna, Prajapati, Dhata, Vidhata, Kubera, Yama, Alambusha, Ugrasena and the gandharva Tumburu were there, each in the place appointed for him and each in his vimana. All the classes of gods, the Siddhas and the supreme rishis arrived to witness the fight between Arjuna and the Kurus. The sacred fragrance of all the divine garlands was everywhere, like flowers in the forests at the beginning of spring. The red and red-tinged umbrellas of the gods could be seen while they stood there, and their garments, garlands and fans. All the dust of the earth subsided and it was permeated by rays. Carrying the divine fragrance, the wind gratified the warriors. The sky seemed to be colourfully decorated and ornamented by the vimanas that had already arrived and those that were arriving. These were decorated with many gems and were colourful and wonderful, brought by the supreme gods.’

648(52)

Vaishampayana said, ‘The great-spirited Kripa was supreme among wielders of weapons. He was immensely valorous and powerful. Meanwhile, in a desire to fight with Arjuna, that maharatha arrived. Those two immensely powerful charioteers, like the sun, got ready to fight. They stationed themselves, looking like two clouds in the autumn. Partha was famous in the world. Drawing the supreme weapon of Gandiva, he discharged many iron arrows that were capable of piercing the heart. But using sharp arrows and iron arrows that drank blood, Kripa sliced Partha’s arrows into hundreds of thousands of pieces, before they could reach him. At that, maharatha Partha was enraged, and exhibiting many circular movements, enveloped the directions with a shower of arrows. The lord Partha, whose soul was infinite, covered the sky with arrows and unleashed hundreds of them on Kripa. He was hit by sharp arrows that were like the crests of fire and enraged, released one thousand arrows on the infinitely energetic Partha. The great-souled Kripa roared on the field of battle. Then the brave Arjuna released four swift arrows, golden at the tips and with straight shafts, from Gandiva and pierced his¹⁴⁴ horses. The four horses were pierced with those excellent arrows. Struck by those

sharp arrows that were like flaming serpents, all the horses suddenly reared up and Kripa was dislodged from his place. When the descendant of the Kuru lineage¹⁴⁵ saw that Goutama¹⁴⁶ had been dislodged from his place, the destroyer of enemy warriors did not pierce him, with a desire to preserve his honour. Having regained his position, Goutama swiftly pierced Savyasachi with ten arrows that were shafted with the feathers of herons. Then Partha sliced his bow with a sharp arrow and made it fall down from his hand. He broke off the armour with other sharp arrows that pierced the heart. However, Partha did not pierce the body. Freed of the armour, his body was radiant, like a snake shedding its skin at the right time. When one bow had been cut down by Partha, Goutama grasped another and strung it. It was extraordinary. Kunti's son cut that down too, with arrows that had smooth shafts. In this way, Sharadvat's son took up many other bows in his hand. But Pandava, the destroyer of enemy warriors, cut them all down. With all his arrows shattered, the powerful charioteer picked up a javelin and hurled it at Pandu's son, like flaming lightning. That javelin was embellished with gold and descended from the sky, like a giant meteor. But Arjuna cut it down with ten arrows. When it was brought down onto the ground by the intelligent Partha, it shattered into ten pieces. In between, Kripa grasped arrows and a bow and swiftly pierced Partha with ten sharp arrows. The greatly energetic Partha was angered in battle. He retaliated with thirteen arrows that had been sharpened on stone, as energetic as the fire. He struck down the yoke with one and used four arrows to kill the four horses. Using a sixth, he sliced off the charioteer's head from the body. In that battle, the immensely strong one cut down the bamboo poles with three and the axles of the wheels with two. With a twelfth arrow, he sliced down the standard. Then smilingly, Phalguna, smote Kripa on the chest with a thirteenth arrow that was like the vajra. His bow was shattered. He was bereft of his chariot. His horses were slain. His charioteer was dead. Kripa quickly jumped down with a club in his hand and hurled a club. But that heavy and decorated club was repulsed by Arjuna with his arrows. To save the intolerant Sharadvat in that field of battle, all the warriors then showered Partha with

arrows from all sides. Virata's son, the charioteer, then turned the horses to the left, executing a *yamaka* turn,¹⁴⁷ so as to restrain those fighters. Extremely swiftly, those bulls among men then took Kripa, who was without a chariot, away from Kunti's son Dhananjaya.'

649(53)

'Arjuna said, "O fortunate one! O venerable one! A golden altar, as radiant as the crest of the fire, is held aloft a golden standard, decorated with golden flags. That is Drona's army. Take me there. His horses are seen to be red and large and they have been trained to bear well. They are quiet and have the complexion of coral. Their faces have the hue of copper and they are pleasant to look at. They are yoked to his supreme chariot and they have been trained in every kind of knowledge. He has long arms and is extremely energetic. He is endowed with strength and beauty. He is famous in all the worlds. He is the powerful Bharadvaja.¹⁴⁸ He is the equal of Ushanas¹⁴⁹ in his intelligence, the equal of Brihaspati¹⁵⁰ in his knowledge of policy. The four Vedas are vested in him, and brahmacharya too. All the divine weapons, with means of withdrawing them, and the entire knowledge of archery,¹⁵¹ are always vested in him. Forgiveness, self-control, truthfulness, non-violence, uprightness—these and many other qualities exist in that supreme of brahmanas. I wish to fight with that immensely fortunate one in battle. O Uttara! Therefore, swiftly bear me to the preceptor.'"

Vaishampayana said, 'Thus spoken to by Arjuna, Virata's son urged the horses, with golden harnesses, in Bharadvaja's direction. Pandava, supreme among charioteers, descended with great force. Drona advanced towards Partha, like a mad elephant towards another. He blew his conch shell, with the roar of a hundred drums, and the entire army was agitated like the ocean. On seeing those excellent red horses mix in battle with ones that were the colour of swans and as swift as the mind,¹⁵² all the men who were in that fight were amazed. They saw those two charioteers, endowed with valour, in the forefront of the battle, the preceptor and the

disciple, Drona and Partha. They were undefeated, learned, intelligent and immensely strong. Each was like the other and they engaged each other. On seeing this, the great army of the Bharatas trembled repeatedly. On reaching Drona's chariot with his own chariot, the valorous maharatha Partha smiled in delight. The mighty-armed Kounteya, the destroyer of enemy warriors, honoured him and spoke to him in soft and conciliatory words. "We have lived the stipulated duration in the forest. We now wish for the act in return. Do not be angry with us. You are always invincible in battle. O unblemished one! I will not strike you first, unless you strike me. I have decided this in accordance with my intelligence. Now do what you deem to be fit." Thus addressed, Drona despatched more than twenty arrows at him. But Partha, swift of hand, sliced them down before they could reach him. Displaying his swiftness in discharge of weapons, the valorous Drona showered Partha's chariot with a thousand arrows. Thus the duel between Bharadvaja and Kiriti commenced. In that battle, both equally released tufted arrows, blazing in energy, at each other. Both of them were famous for their deeds, both were as swift as the wind. Both were knowledgeable in the use of divine weapons. Both were extremely energetic. When they unleashed their nets of arrows, they confounded the kings. All the assembled warriors were astounded and applauded and honoured the release of arrows. "Who but Phalguna is capable of countering Drona in battle? The dharma of kshatriyas is terrible. He has to fight with his preceptor." These were the words spoken by those who were stationed in the forefront of that battle.

Those two brave maharathas drew near and covered each other with arrows, to defeat the other. Bharadvaja was angered and drew an invincible and large bow that was plated with gold at the back. He countered Phalguna. He discharged a net of arrows towards Arjuna's chariot. They were as bright as the sun and had been sharpened on stone. They shrouded the rays of the sun. The mighty-armed maharatha pierced Partha with extremely fast and sharp arrows, like clouds showering a mountain with rain. Pandava happily grasped the divine bow Gandiva, capable of destroying enemies at great speed and capable of bearing a supreme

burden. He released many colourful and golden arrows from that bow and repulsed the valorous Bharadvaja's shower of arrows. It was extraordinary. Partha Dhananjaya roamed around on his chariot and it was a sight fit to behold. He displayed all his weapons simultaneously in all directions. With his arrows, he covered the entire sky with one large shadow. Drona could no longer be seen, as if he was enshrouded in fog. When he was covered with these supreme arrows, his form seemed to be like that of a mountain, with fires blazing in every direction. On seeing that his chariot was covered by Partha's arrows in that battle, he drew his beautiful bow, with a roar that was like that of the clouds. He drew that supreme and terrible weapon, which was like a circle of fire. Drona, the adornment of assemblies, then countered all those arrows. A great sound arose, like that when bamboos are burnt. Gold-tufted arrows were discharged from his supreme bow. The one whose soul was immeasurable enveloped the directions and the rays of the sun. Those arrows were golden-tufted and straight. When they traversed the sky, they were seen to be like many beings.¹⁵³ The tufted arrows were released from Drona's bow and it seemed as if there was one long and single arrow in the sky.¹⁵⁴ Thus releasing great arrows that were decorated in gold, those two brave ones covered the sky, as if with meteors. Decorated with the feathers of herons and peacocks, the arrows looked like a flock of geese travelling in the autumn sky. There ensued a terrible and fearful battle between the great-souled Drona and Pandava, like that between Vritra and Vasava.¹⁵⁵ They wounded each other, like elephants with their tusks. They shot arrows at each other from bows that were completely stretched. They fiercely decorated that field of battle. From one part of the battlefield to another, they released divine weapons. Arjuna, supreme among victorious ones, used sharp arrows to counter the arrows, sharpened on stone, released by the best of preceptors. Indra's son displayed his own terrible aspect and swiftly covered the sky with many arrows.

‘Drona, foremost among teachers and supreme among the wielders of arms, began to play with the supremely energetic Arjuna, tiger among men, who was trying to kill him in that battle. He used arrows with

straight shafts. Bharadvaja unleashed divine weapons in that great battle. Phalguna countered every weapon with another weapon. The duel between those two angry and intolerant lions among men was like that between the gods and the danavas. Drona released Aindra, Vayavya and Agneya weapons¹⁵⁶ and Pandava used his own weapons to devour them. Those two brave and great archers released sharp arrows and covered the entire sky, like a shadow, with showers of arrows. When Arjuna released arrows and they descended on the bodies,¹⁵⁷ the sound that was heard was like that of lightning on mountains. O lord of the earth! Elephants, charioteers and horses looked like blossoming kimshuka flowers,¹⁵⁸ drenched in blood. When they fell down, the arms of the maharathas were adorned with colourful armlets and their armour and pennants were golden. Oppressed by Partha's arrows, many warriors died there. The armies were confounded in that encounter between Drona and Arjuna. Both of them brandished their bows, capable of withstanding great burdens. In that battle, they covered each other with arrows and bore the retaliation. A voice was heard from the sky, praising Drona. "Drona has performed an extremely difficult task of fighting with Arjuna, who is the destroyer of enemies, extremely valorous, firm in his hand and unassailable. The maharatha is the conqueror of all the gods, the daityas and the snakes." On beholding Partha's fixedness, learning, dexterity and great reach in battle, Drona was amazed. O bull among the Bharata lineage! In that battle, Partha raised the invincible and divine bow Gandiva and drew it with his arms. He released a shower of arrows, like a cloud of locusts. Even the wind was not capable of gliding through those arrows. There was not even an instant between Partha's shooting an arrow and the next one, no gap could be seen. In that extremely terrible battle of swiftly released weapons, Partha shot the arrows faster and faster. Then hundreds and thousands of straight-tufted arrows descended simultaneously on Drona's chariot. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The wielder of the Gandiva enveloped Drona with arrows and a great lamentation arose from the army. Maghavan¹⁵⁹ himself applauded Pandava's swiftness with weapons and so did the gandharvas and apsaras who had assembled there.

‘Then the preceptor’s son, leader of charioteers, suddenly encircled Pandava with a great number of chariots. Though Ashvatthama was greatly enraged with Partha, in his heart, the great-souled one applauded his deeds. Overcome by anger, he confronted Partha in that battle and showered him with arrows, like Parjanya¹⁶⁰ showering rain. The mighty-armed one turned his horses towards Drona’s son and thus Partha gave Drona a chance to retreat. His armour and flag had been shattered with supreme arrows and getting the opportunity, the brave one left on his swift horses.’

650(54)

Vaishampayana said, ‘He¹⁶¹ arrived with great speed, showering a great net of arrows, like clouds charged with rain. Partha countered him. There was a great battle, like that between the gods and the asuras. Like Vritra and Vasava, they covered each other with nets of arrows. The sun did not shine then. Nor did the wind blow. The sky was enveloped and shadowed by a net of arrows in every direction. O conqueror of enemy cities! There was a great sound of slapping, as the two warriors fought each other and tried to kill each other, like the sound of bamboos being burnt. Arjuna destroyed his horses and only a few were left alive. O king! They were so confused that they could not make out the directions. Partha was roaming around. Drona’s immensely valorous son detected a subtle weakness and sliced off the string of his bow with an arrow that was as sharp as a razor. On witnessing this superhuman feat, the gods applauded. From a distance of eight bow-lengths, Drona’s son, bull among men, again pierced Partha in the heart with an arrow that was shafted with feathers of herons. The mighty-armed Partha laughed out aloud and powerfully corded Gandiva with a new string. Partha drew it in the shape of a half-moon and countered him, like the mad leader of a herd of elephants against another crazy elephant. Those two warriors were unrivalled on earth. In the midst of that field of battle, an extremely great duel ensued, making the body hair stand up. On seeing those two great-souled and brave ones, like two

leaders of herds engaged in combat, all the Kurus were astounded. Those two brave bulls among men struck each other with arrows that were like virulent poison and like flaming serpents. The great-souled Pandava possessed two divine and inexhaustible quivers. Therefore, the brave Partha stood on that field of battle, immobile as a mountain. But Ashvatthama's arrows were speedily discharged in that battle and were exhausted. Thus, Arjuna proved to be superior to him.

‘Then Karna grasped an extremely large bow. He drew it in great anger and a great sound of lamentation arose. Partha looked in the direction where the bow had been drawn and seeing Radheya there, his anger increased. He was overcome by anger and wished to kill Karna. With dilated eyes, the bull among the Kurus glanced towards him. O king! He turned away from Drona's son, although the soldiers swiftly brought thousands of arrows to him. The mighty-armed Dhananjaya, conqueror of enemies, ignored Drona's son and suddenly rushed towards Karna. With eyes red in anger, Kounteya approached him, hoping for a duel in battle. He said ...’

651(55)

‘Arjuna said, “O Karna! You uttered many proud words in the midst of the assembly hall, to the effect that there was no one who was your equal in war. Disregarding all of dharma, you spoke harsh words. But I think that your wish is impossible to accomplish. You ignored me and spoke words earlier. O Radheya! Now, with me and in the midst of these Kurus, make that true. You watched when evil-souled ones oppressed Panchali in the assembly hall. You will now reap the fruits of that. Being bound down by the noose of dharma, my rage was restrained earlier. O Radheya! You will now witness the victory of my anger in battle. O Karna! Now fight with me and let all the Kurus and their soldiers witness it.”

‘Karna replied, “O Partha! Carry out in deeds what you have spoken in words. It is known on earth that deeds are superior to words. What you suffered earlier was because your powers were insufficient. O Partha! I will accept it only if I witness your valour. If your rage was restrained

earlier because you were bound down by the noose of dharma, you are tied down even now, though you consider yourself to be free. You say that you are conversant with dharma and artha. If you have dwelt in the forest in accordance with the promise, why do you wish to break that agreement now?¹⁶² O Partha! If Shakra himself decides to fight on your behalf, I will not deviate from displaying my valour. O Kounteya! Your desire will soon be fulfilled. You will fight with me today and witness my strength.”

‘Arjuna said, “When fighting with me, you have earlier fled from the field of battle. O Radheya! That is the reason why you are still alive, though your younger brother has been killed. Which man other than you will see his brother dead, and then flee from the forefront of battle? Then you speak like this in the midst of truthful ones.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having thus spoken to Karna, the unvanquished Bibhatsu attacked him and released arrows that could penetrate body armour. Karna countered with arrows that were like the crests of flames and rained down a great shower of arrows, like monsoon clouds. The terrible net of arrows covered every direction. They separately pierced his¹⁶³ horses, arms and guards on his hands. Unable to tolerate this, he sliced off the strap of Karna’s quiver with a straight-tufted arrow, sharp at the tip. Grasping other arrows from his quiver, Karna pierced Pandava on the hand, so that his grip weakened. The mighty-armed Arjuna then sliced off Karna’s bow. He¹⁶⁴ hurled a javelin at him, but Partha cut that down with arrows. Then Radheya’s large infantry attacked. But they were sent to Yama’s abode with arrows released from Gandiva. Bibhatsu then stretched his bow up to his ears and killed his horses with sharp arrows that could take a great weight. They fell down dead on the ground. The mighty-armed and valorous Kounteya took up another flaming arrow and pierced Karna in the chest. The arrow pierced his armour and penetrated his body. He was immersed in darkness and lost consciousness for some time. Suffering great pain, he left the field of battle in a northern direction. Arjuna and maharatha Uttara started to censure him.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having defeated Vaikartana, Partha told Virata’s son, “Take me to the army where there is a golden palm.¹⁶⁵ Our grandfather, Shantanu’s son Bhishma, is stationed on a chariot there. He looks like an immortal and is stationed there, wishing to fight with me. I will cut down the string of his bow in a battle. You will witness today a colourful and divine weapon unleashed by me. It will streak like lightning in the midst of a storm in the sky. The Kurus will witness my Gandiva, with a golden back. All the assembled enemies will debate among themselves, ‘Is he shooting with the right hand or the left?’¹⁶⁶ I will make an impassable river flow, with waves of blood, eddies of chariots and elephants as crocodiles. It will flow towards the next world. This forest of Kurus has hands, feet, heads, backs and arms as branches. I will cut it down with straight-tufted arrows. The Kourava soldiers will be vanquished by my bow alone. Like a fire in the forest, I will create a hundred paths. Pierced by me alone, you will see the soldiers twirling on a wheel. Stand firmly on the chariot, over plain and uneven ground. I will pierce with my arrows the mountain that rises up into the sky. Earlier, on Indra’s instructions, I killed thousands and hundreds of Poulamas and Kalakhanjas in battle.¹⁶⁷ I have obtained my firm grip from Indra and my dexterity of hand from Brahma. I have learnt from Prajapati deep, terrible and wonderful techniques.¹⁶⁸ I destroyed Hiranyapura on the other side of the ocean, after vanquishing sixty thousand charioteers who wielded terrible bows.¹⁶⁹ The forest of the Kurus has the banners as the trees, the soldiers as the grass and the chariots as groups of lions. I will consume it with the energy of my weapons. With my straight-tufted arrows, I will draw them out from the nests of their chariots, like the wielder of the vajra destroyed the asuras alone. I obtained the Roudra weapon from Rudra, Varuna¹⁷⁰ from Varuna, the Agneya weapon from Agni, Vayavya from Matarishvan¹⁷¹ and the vajra and other weapons from Shakra. The terrible sons of Dhritarashtra are protected by lions among men. But I will uproot them. O son of Virata! Remove all your fears.” Thus assured by

Savyasachi, Virata's son penetrated the intelligent Bhishma's terrible army of chariots.

‘The mighty-armed Dhananjaya advanced to conquer his enemies, but the one who was terrible in his deeds¹⁷² countered this fearful advance. Four immensely strong ones advanced towards the one with the terrible bow—Duhshasana, Vikarna, Duhsaha and Vivimshati. They were skilled and spirited and adorned with colourful garlands and ornaments. They advanced and countered Bibhatsu, the wielder of the terrible bow. Duhshasana pierced Virata's son Uttara with an arrow. With a second one, the brave one pierced Arjuna on the chest. Jishnu¹⁷³ circled. With an arrow that was shafted with the feathers of vultures and had a broad tip, he sliced off his¹⁷⁴ bow that was decorated with polished gold. He then pierced him in the breast with five arrows. Oppressed by Partha's arrows, he fled from the field of battle. With arrows that were sharp, straight and shafted with the feathers of vultures, Dhritarashtra's son Vikarna then pierced Arjuna, the slayer of enemy warriors. But Kounteya immediately pierced him with straight-tufted arrows on his forehead and thus wounded, he fell down from the chariot. Then, seeking to rescue their brother in battle, Duhsaha, together with Vivimshati, rushed towards Partha and enveloped him with sharp arrows. But the alert Dhananjaya struck both of them at the same time with sharp arrows that were shafted with the feathers of vultures and killed their horses. With their horses slain and their limbs pierced, the two sons of Dhritarashtra were borne away by their followers, who arrived on other chariots. Thus the unvanquished Bibhatsu, the diademed and immensely strong Kounteya, accomplished in striking the target, covered all the directions.’

653(57)

Vaishampayana said, ‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! All the maharatha Kouravas now got together and counter-attacked Arjuna with determination. But the one whose soul cannot be measured covered the maharathas everywhere with showers of arrows, like mountains shrouded

with fog. The giant elephants trumpeted. The horses neighed. The kettledrums and conch shells resounded. A terrible tumult arose. Piercing the bodies of men and horses, slicing through iron armour, Partha's shower of arrows struck in thousands. Partha swiftly strode and shot arrows in that battle, ablaze like the resplendent autumn sun at midday. Struck by terror, the charioteers leapt down from their chariots and the cavalry from their horses. The infantry began to flee on the ground. When the great-souled one's arrows pierced the armour, made of copper, silver and iron, there was a mighty roar. The entire battlefield was strewn with bodies of those who had lost their senses, and with elephants, horses and other animals which had been robbed of their lives by the sharp arrows. The earth was covered with the corpses of those who had fallen down from their stations on the chariots. Dhananjaya seemed to be dancing in that battle, with a bow in his hand. On hearing Gandiva's twang, like the roar of the thunder, all the beings were frightened and fled from the great field of battle. The fallen heads could be seen in the forefront of that battle, with earrings and headdresses embellished with gold. The earth was strewn with bodies that had been destroyed by the arrows, with the arms holding bows and the hands decorated with ornaments. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Because the heads were struck down with sharp arrows, it seemed as if a shower of rocks had fallen down from the sky. Having displayed his terrible self, Partha, whose valour was terrible, roamed around, after having been restrained for thirteen years. The brave Pandava unleashed the anger of his wrath on the sons of Dhritarashtra. On witnessing his valour as he burnt down the soldiers, all the warriors sought peace, while Dhritarashtra's son¹⁷⁵ looked on. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having terrified the soldiers and routed the maharathas, Arjuna, foremost among victorious ones, roamed around. He made a terrible river flow. Its current was made out of blood. The moss was made out of bones. It was as if destiny had fashioned it at the end of an era.¹⁷⁶ There was a terrible flow of bows and arrows. The mud was made out of flesh and blood. The great chariots were like giant islands. There was the roar of conch shells and drums. Thus Partha created a giant river of blood that was difficult to

cross. No one could make out when he affixed his arrows and released them, or when he drew the Gandiva, because no gap could be discerned.’

654(58)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Duryodhana, Karna, Duhshasana, Vivimshati, Drona and his son, and Kripa who was an atiratha in battle, returned angrily to the battle again, wishing to cause violence to Dhananjaya. They drew their sturdy and powerful bows. O great king! The one with the monkey on his banner¹⁷⁷ went forward to meet them on a chariot that was as radiant as the sun, with his flag unfurled. Kripa, Karna and Drona, supreme among charioteers, immensely valorous and with great weapons, sought to repulse Dhananjaya. They released a flood of arrows, like rain from monsoon clouds. A shower of arrows descended on Kiriti. They stationed themselves nearby and with great determination in that field of battle, swiftly showered him with many arrows that possessed feathered shafts. Having been thus covered from every direction with divine weapons, not even a space of two fingers could be seen on him. But maharatha Bibhatsu laughed and fixed his divine Aindra¹⁷⁸ weapon on Gandiva. It was as radiant as the sun. In that battle, the diademed and powerful Kounteya covered all the Kurus with arrows that burnt like the rays of the sun. Gandiva was like lightning in the clouds, like fire in the mountains and as long as Indra’s weapon.¹⁷⁹ It was like Parjanya’s showers and like lightning in the sky. Like a bird, Gandiva enveloped the ten directions. All the charioteers were completely terrified and sought peace. They were bereft of their senses. Losing their consciousness, all the warriors lost heart in the battle. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Thus, all the soldiers were shattered and fled in all the directions. They lost hope that they would remain alive.’

655(59)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Then Shantanu’s son Bhishma, powerful and invincible, advanced towards Dhananjaya, while all the warriors were

being killed in battle. He took up the best of bows, decorated with gold, and arrows that were sharp at the tip, capable of piercing the vitals of the heart. A white umbrella was held aloft his head. The tiger among men was as radiant as a mountain at the time of sunrise. Ganga's son¹⁸⁰ blew on his conch shell and delighted the sons of Dhritarashtra. He circled¹⁸¹ and prepared to battle Bibhatsu. On seeing him advance, Kounteya, the destroyer of enemies, received him gladly, like a mountain receives a cloud full of rain.

‘The brave Bhishma shot eight arrows at Partha's banner. They were extremely swift and hissed like serpents. Those blazing and feathered arrows struck the banner of Pandu's son and struck the monkey and other beings that were stationed on the top of the standard. With an arrow that was sharp and broad, Pandava sliced off Bhishma's umbrella and it fell down on the ground. With firm and swift arrows, Kounteya struck his banner, the horses yoked to his chariot and the two charioteers who guarded his flanks. Then a terrible battle began between Bhishma and Pandava, like that between Bali and Vasava,¹⁸² and it made the body hair stand up. When Bhishma and Pandava fought each other in that battle, arrows countered arrows in the sky and seemed like fireflies during the rains. O king! As Partha shot arrows with his left hand and his right, Gandiva looked like an unbroken circle of fire. He enveloped Bhishma with hundreds of sharp arrows, like a rain cloud covering a mountain with a shower of rain. With his own arrows, Bhishma repulsed Arjuna and countered that shower of arrows, like a shoreline beating back waves. In that battle, the shower of arrows was splintered and fell down around Phalguna's chariot. A shower of arrows with golden shafts then arose from Pandava's chariot, like a swarm of locusts. But yet again, Bhishma cut them down with hundreds of sharp arrows. All the Kurus applauded. “Wonderful! Bhishma has accomplished a difficult task in fighting with Arjuna. Pandava is powerful, young, skilled and swift. Truly, who other than Shantanu's son Bhishma, Devaki's son Krishna, or the immensely strong preceptor who is Bharadvaja's son, is capable of withstanding Partha's force in battle?” Using weapons to counter weapons, those bulls

among men seemed to be playing. Those immensely strong ones confounded the sights of all beings. Those great-souled ones roamed on that field of battle, using Prajapatya, Aindreya, the extremely terrible Agneya, Koubera, Varuna, Yama and Vayavya weapons.¹⁸³ All the beings who witnessed the battle were astounded. They said, “O mighty-armed Partha! Wonderful! O Bhishma! Wonderful! It is not for men to witness this great battle with mighty weapons between Bhishma and Partha.” Thus the battle between those two, who were skilled in the use of all weapons, went on. Then Jishnu fixed a broad and sharp arrow to his bow and sliced down Bhishma’s bow, which was decorated with gold. In an instant, the mighty-armed and immensely strong Bhishma grasped another bow in the field of battle, strung it, and angrily released many arrows at Dhananjaya. But Arjuna shot many sharp and colourful arrows at Bhishma and the immensely energetic Bhishma shot many at Pandava. They were both skilled in the use of divine weapons and incessantly shot arrows at each other. O king! Neither of the great-souled ones could be seen to be superior. The diademed Kounteya and Shantanu’s brave son, both atirathas, covered the ten directions with their arrows. At times, Pandava surpassed Bhishma. At other times, Bhishma surpassed Pandava. O king! That battle was extraordinary in this world.

‘Pandava killed the brave warriors who guarded Bhishma’s chariot. O king! Killed by Kounteya, they were piled up in front of the chariot. Shvetavahana’s¹⁸⁴ feathered shafts seemed to have wings. They leapt up when released from Gandiva, wishing to destroy the enemy. They leapt up from his chariot, white and adorned in gold, like a flock of geese seen in the sky. He released his deep and divine weapons and it was marvellous. All the gods, together with Vasava, assembled in the sky to witness this. On witnessing this extraordinary sight, the powerful gandharva Chitrasena was extremely delighted and told the king of the gods these words of praise. “Look at the way these arrows, the destroyers of enemies, travel. As Jishnu releases his divine weapons, they are linked in a chain. Men will not believe this, because they¹⁸⁵ do not exist among them. There has been a wonderful collection of these ancient and great weapons. The soldiers

are incapable of looking at Pandava. He dazzles like the midday sun in the sky. They are both famous in their deeds. They are skilled in battle. They are equal in their exploits. They are extremely difficult to vanquish in battle.” O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing these words, the king of the gods honoured the duel between Partha and Bhishma with a divine shower of flowers. Having perceived a weakness, Shantanu’s son Bhishma attacked Savyasachi from the left side. But Bibhatsu laughed out aloud. With a broad and sharp arrow, shafted with the feathers of vultures, he sliced down the infinitely energetic Bhishma’s bow. With ten arrows, Kunti’s son, Dhananjaya, pierced the brave and careful one on his chest. Thus oppressed, Ganga’s mighty-armed son, invincible in battle, clung to the pole of the chariot and stood there for a long time. On seeing that he had lost his senses, the charioteer remembered his instructions, and controlling the horses that were yoked to the chariot, drove away, so as to protect the maharatha.’

656(60)

Vaishampayana said, ‘When Bhishma had left the forefront of that battle and had run away, Dhritarashtra’s great-souled son raised up his standard and himself advanced towards Arjuna. Dhananjaya, extremely valorous and wielder of the terrible bow, was roaming around in the midst of the enemy hordes. He drew his bow up to his ears and with an arrow pierced him in the middle of his forehead.¹⁸⁶ The arrow’s tip was extremely sharp and golden. O king! Struck by it, the performer of great deeds looked as beautiful as a mountain with a single peak. Pierced by the arrow, warm blood gushed out of the wound. The golden arrow was as beautiful as a flowery garland. Struck by the arrow, he was angered and rushed at Duryodhana in wrath. He took out arrows that were like poison and fire and spiritedly pierced the king.¹⁸⁷ Duryodhana was extremely energetic and attacked Partha and the brave one¹⁸⁸ attacked Duryodhana alone. Those two brave ones among men fought each other. They were both equal and were born in the lineage of Ajamidha.¹⁸⁹ Vikarna also rode on a

gigantic and rutting elephant that was as large as a mountain and with four chariots protecting the elephant's legs, attacked Kunti's son, Jishnu. That Indra among elephants swiftly bore down on him. Dhananjaya grasped an extremely swift iron arrow. Drawing his bow up to his ears, he pierced it between its temples. The arrow released by Partha was shafted with the feathers of vultures. It penetrated the elephant, right up to the feathers. Like the vajra released by Indra shatters a mountain, it shattered the one that was like a mountain.¹⁹⁰ The king of elephants was tormented by that arrow. Its limbs began to tremble and its soul was distressed. It slowly fell down on the ground, like the peak of a mountain that has been struck by a thunderbolt. When the supreme of tusked ones fell down on the ground, Vikarna was terrified and dismounted swiftly. He fled for a full eight hundred paces and climbed onto Vivimshati's chariot. Having slain the elephant with the arrow, like the vajra strikes down a mountain or a cloud, Partha used a similar arrow to pierce Duryodhana on the chest. The elephant and the king having both been pierced, Vikarna having been routed with the infantry that guarded him, the foremost among warriors were frightened of the arrows released from Gandiva, and swiftly fled.

‘Having seen that the elephant had been killed with an arrow and that all the warriors had run away, the foremost among Kurus¹⁹¹ retreated on his chariot from the field of battle and went to a spot where Partha was not present. But Kiriti was still eager to do battle. The destroyer of enemies addressed Duryodhana, who had been pierced by the arrow and was vomiting blood, and was swiftly trying to run away in terrible fright. Arjuna said, “Renounce your deeds and great fame. Why are you running away in this way and refraining from battle? Why aren't trumpets being sounded for you now, the way they were sounded when you set out to do battle? I obediently follow Yudhishtira's instructions. I am the third of the Parthas¹⁹² and I am steadfast in battle. Therefore, turn around and show me your face. O son of Dhritarashtra! Remember how Indras among men¹⁹³ are supposed to act. You have been named Duryodhana earlier, but that name will be uttered on earth in vain.¹⁹⁴ There is no Duryodhana left in you. You are running away and refraining from battle. I do not see

anyone to protect Duryodhana, either at the front or at the back. O foremost among Kurus! Therefore, run away from the battle. Protect your beloved life from the Pandava.””

657(61)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Dhritarashtra’s great-souled son was thus summoned to do battle. He was brought back by that goad of words, like a mad elephant with a goad. The maharatha became intolerant because of the insulting words spoken by the spirited atiratha.¹⁹⁵ Like a serpent that has been stepped on with the sole of the foot, the brave one turned his chariot back. Karna saw that he was turning around. He also returned and tended to his¹⁹⁶ wounded limbs. He advanced towards Duryodhana’s right flank and got ready to fight with Partha, the brave one among men, who was adorned in a golden garland. Shantanu’s son Bhishma also returned. He swiftly prodded his horses with golden harnesses and protected Duryodhana from the rear from Partha, the mighty-armed one who wielded a bow. Drona, Kripa, Vivimshati and Duhshasana also swiftly returned. All of them swiftly arrived with bows and arrows to protect Duryodhana. Partha saw those armies return, like heavy clouds. Like a swan advancing towards a descending cloud, the spirited Dhananjaya advanced towards them. They grasped divine weapons and surrounded Partha from every direction. They showered down arrows on him, like clouds showering rain on the summit of a mountain. The wielder of the Gandiva used weapons to counter the weapons of the bulls among the Kurus. The destroyer of enemies then made the weapon named sammohana¹⁹⁷ appear. This was impossible to counter. He covered all the directions and all the smaller directions with sharp arrows that had fine tips and fine shafts. With the roar of the Gandiva, the immensely strong one struck terror in their minds. He then grasped the giant conch shell in both his hands, one that had a deep and trembling sound. Partha, the destroyer of enemies, used this to make the sound echo in the directions, the smaller directions, the sky and the earth. At the roar of the conch shell

blown by Partha, the foremost among the Kurus fell down unconscious. They gave up their invincible bows and all of them resorted to peace.¹⁹⁸

‘When they had lost consciousness, Partha remembered Uttara’s¹⁹⁹ words. He told Matsya’s son, “Go from the centre to where the Kurus are lying unconscious. Bring the preceptor’s and Sharadvat’s son’s²⁰⁰ extremely white garments and Karna’s beautiful one. Those of Drona’s son and the king²⁰¹ are blue. O brave one among men! Go and fetch those garments. I think that Bhishma knows how to counter the weapon and is still in his senses. Therefore, when you approach those who have not lost their senses, you should leave his vehicles to the left.”²⁰² Virata’s great-souled son handed over the reins and jumped down from the chariot. He gathered the garments of the maharathas and again swiftly ascended his own chariot. Virata’s son then drove those four well-trained horses with golden harnesses. Bearing Arjuna, the white steeds passed through the midst of the army and its standards. When that foremost among men passed through, the spirited Bhishma shot arrows at him. But he killed Bhishma’s horses and struck him in the side with ten arrows. Having killed his charioteer, Arjuna, the wielder of the invincible bow, left Bhishma on the field of battle. He emerged from the midst of that mass of chariots, like the one with the thousand rays shatters Rahu.²⁰³

‘Dhritarashtra’s son, foremost among the Kurus, regained his consciousness soon and beheld Partha, the equal of the great Indra. He saw him stationed alone, away from the field of battle. He quickly asked,²⁰⁴ “How did he escape from you? Oppress him, so that he cannot escape.” Shantanu’s son laughingly replied, “Where did your intelligence disappear? Where was your valour? You had given up your colourful bow and your arrows. You were immersed in complete peace then. Bibhatsu is incapable of cruel deeds. His mind is never immersed in sin. He will not give up his own dharma even for the sake of the three worlds.²⁰⁵ That is the reason all of us have not been killed in this battle. O foremost among the Kurus! Return swiftly to the Kuru kingdom. Let Partha return with the cattle he has conquered.” On hearing these words of the grandfather, which

were meant for his welfare, Duryodhana gave up all desire to fight. The intolerant king sighed deeply, but kept silent. All the others saw the wisdom in Bhishma's words and knew the increasing fire within Dhananjaya. They therefore made up their minds to return and carefully protected Duryodhana.

‘On seeing the foremost among the Kurus leave, Partha Dhananjaya was delighted in his mind. The great-souled one followed them for an instant, so as to honour his superiors. He bowed down, with his head on the ground, before the aged grandfather, Shantanu's son and the preceptor Drona. He used colourful arrows to show homage to Drona's son, Kripa and all his superiors. Partha then used an arrow to slice off Duryodhana's jewelled crown from his head. Having greeted the brave ones who deserved to be honoured, he filled the world with the roar of Gandiva. The brave one suddenly sounded Devadatta²⁰⁶ and shattered the minds of his enemies. Having vanquished all his enemies, his pennant, garlanded with gold, was radiant. On seeing the Kurus leave, Kiriti happily told the son of Matsya, “The animals have been won. Make the horses return. The enemies have left. Let us return happily to the city.”’

658(62)

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having defeated the Kurus in battle, the one with the eyes of a bull²⁰⁷ gathered and brought back Virata's great riches. When the sons of Dhritarashtra had all been shattered and had left, many Kuru soldiers emerged from the dense woods. Their hearts trembled in fright and they appeared, here and there. They could be seen standing there, their hair dishevelled and with their hands joined in salutation. They were hungry and thirsty and exhausted and in an alien land, they were not in their senses. They bowed down in homage before Partha and asked, “What will we do?” Arjuna replied, “O fortunate ones! Be safe. There is no reason for you to be scared. I assure you that I have no desire to kill those who are miserable.” On hearing these words of assurance, the assembled

warriors praised him and wished for a long life, deeds and fame for him. Shattered and vanquished, the Kurus returned.

‘On the road back, Phalguna spoke these words. “O brave prince! O mighty-armed one! Wait until all the cattle and all the cowherds have been collected. We will return to the city of Virata in the afternoon, after the horses have rested, have had their drink and have been tended to. The cowherds should now be swiftly dispatched by you. Let them go to the city with the good news that announces your victory.”²⁰⁸ Uttara quickly told the messengers, “On Arjuna’s instructions, go and proclaim my victory.”’

Section Forty-Eight

Vaivahika Parva

This section has 179 shlokas and five chapters.

Chapter 659(63): 54 shlokas

Chapter 660(64): 37 shlokas

Chapter 661(65): 21 shlokas

Chapter 662(66): 29 shlokas

Chapter 663(67): 38 shlokas

Vivaha means wedding. After defeating the Kurus and winning back the cattle, Arjuna and Uttara return. The Pandavas reveal themselves. Arjuna and Subhadra's son, Abhimanyu, is married to Virata's daughter, Uttara.

659(63)

Vaishampayana said, 'Leading an army, Virata had also won back his riches. With the other four Pandavas, he cheerfully entered the city. After defeating the Trigartas in battle and winning back all the cows, the great king, together with the Parthas, was radiant, surrounded by his prosperity. The brave one increased the delight of his well-wishers. He seated himself on his throne and all the ordinary subjects, together with the brahmanas, showed him homage. The king of Matsya, together with his army, honoured them in return. Then he gave the brahmanas, and the ordinary subjects, permission to leave. King Virata of Matsya, the leader of an army, then asked about Uttara. "Where has he gone?" All the women and maidens who dwelt in the inner quarters of the palace happily replied, "The Kurus abducted the wealth of cattle. Prithivinjaya was angry. He

rashly went out alone, together with Brihannada, to defeat the six atiratha charioteers who had attacked us—Drona, Shantanu's son, Kripa, Karna, Duryodhana and Drona's son.” On hearing that his son, eager to fight, had gone out alone on a chariot, with Brihannada as his charioteer, King Virata was tormented by grief and told his chief advisers, “Hearing that the Trigartas have been routed, all the Kurus and the lords of the earth will certainly not remain unmoved. Therefore, let those of my warriors, who have not been injured by the Trigartas, go out with a large army to protect Uttara.” For the sake of his son, he swiftly instructed horses, elephants, chariots and a large number of brave infantry to advance, with many weapons and decorated with ornaments. King Virata of Matsya, the leader of an army, quickly instructed the army that consisted of four parts,¹ “Swiftly find out whether the prince is dead or alive. With a eunuch as his charioteer, I think that he cannot be alive.” Dharmaraja then laughed and told Virata, oppressed and tormented by the Kurus, “O Indra among men! If Brihannada is his charioteer, no enemy will now be able to take away the cattle. Served well by that charioteer, your son is capable of defeating in battle all the lords of the earth, together with the Kurus, even the gods, the asuras, the yakshas and the serpents.” Meanwhile, the swift messengers dispatched by Uttara arrived in the city of Virata and announced the news of his victory.

‘The chief adviser described everything to the king—the supreme victory, the defeat of the Kurus and Uttara's return. “All the cattle have been won back. The Kurus have been defeated. Uttara, the scorcher of enemies, is safe, together with his charioteer.” Kanka² said, “It is through good fortune that the cattle have been recovered and the Kurus defeated. O bull among kings! It is through good fortune that we have heard that your son is alive. It is certain that one, who has Brihannada as his charioteer, will triumph.” On hearing about the victory of his infinitely energetic son, King Virata was extremely delighted and his body hair stood up. He rewarded the messengers with garments and instructed his ministers, “Let the royal roads be decorated with flags. Let all the gods be honoured with offerings of flowers. Let princes, foremost warriors, well-ornamented

harlots and all the musicians go out to receive my son. Let a man with a bell quickly mount an intoxicated elephant. Let him go to the crossroads and proclaim my victory. Let Uttara³ go to receive Brihannada, surrounded by many maidens who bear the garments and ornaments of love.”⁴ On hearing the words of the lord of the earth, everyone held auspicious marks⁵ in the hands and bore cymbals, trumpets and conch shells. There were beautiful women in gorgeous garments. There were bards and raconteurs. There were trumpets and other pleasant-sounding musical instruments. They emerged from immensely strong Virata’s city, to receive his infinitely valorous son.

‘After the soldiers, the maidens and the ornamented harlots had left, the immensely wise king of Matsya happily said, “O sairandhri!⁶ Fetch the dice. O Kanka! Let the gambling commence.” When he said this, Pandava⁷ looked at him and replied, “We have heard it said that one should not play with a gambler who is rejoicing. Now that you are so delighted, I should not play with you. I always act so as to bring you pleasure. But if you so wish, let it commence.” Virata said, “Even if I do not gamble, today, you will not be able to save my women, my cattle, my gold and whatever other riches I possess.”⁸ Kanka replied, “O Indra among kings! Why do you wish to gamble? O one who grants honours! There are many vices and many sins in gambling and it should be avoided. You may have heard of, or seen, Pandava Yudhishtira. He lost his extremely large and prosperous kingdoms and his brothers, who were the equals of the thirty gods. He lost everything through gambling. Therefore, I find no pleasure in gambling. O king! But if it pleases you to gamble, we will play.” While the gambling was going on, Matsya told Pandava, “Behold! My son has vanquished the likes of the Kurus in battle.” At this, Dharma’s son, Yudhishtira, replied to the king of Matsya, “How can one who has Brihannada as a charioteer not be victorious?” At this, the king of Matsya was enraged and told Pandava, “O brahmana! You are praising a eunuch, as if he is equal to my son. Do you not know what should be said and what should not be said? You are insulting me. Why should he not defeat all the warriors, with Bhishma and Drona at the forefront? O brahmana! For the sake of our

friendship, I will pardon you this affront. But if you wish to live, you must not speak in this fashion again.” Yudhishtira said, “O Indra among kings! If Drona and Bhishma are there, Drona’s son, Vaikartana and Kripa, and Duryodhana and many other maharathas, even if Shatakratu is himself there, surrounded by masses of Maruts, who other than Brihannada can fight all of them together?” Virata replied, “I have restrained you in many ways. But you do not control your words. If there is no one to restrain, who will observe dharma?” Having said this, the enraged king struck Yudhishtira on the face with the dice and angrily censured him. So powerfully was he struck that blood began to flow from his nose. Partha caught it in his hands before it fell down on the ground. The one with dharma in his soul glanced at Droupadi, who was standing at one side. Having got to know his intentions, and obedient to the wishes of her husband, the unblemished one filled a golden vessel with water. She used this to gather the blood that flowed from Pandava.

‘Thereafter Uttara, adorned with pure fragrances and many garlands, happily and slowly entered the city. He was welcomed by the citizens, the women and the residents of the countryside. He approached the gate of the palace and sent word to his father. The gatekeeper entered and told Virata, “Your son Uttara is standing at the gate, together with Brihannada.” Delighted, the king of Matsya told his *kshatta*,⁹ “Bring both of them here immediately. I am anxious to see them.” But the king of the Kurus¹⁰ swiftly whispered in the *kshatta*’s ears, “Let Uttara enter alone. Do not allow Brihannada to enter. The mighty-armed one has sworn an oath. If anyone wounds my limbs, or if anyone makes blood flow from my body without it being in an act of battle, he will certainly not remain alive. If he sees this blood flowing from my body, he will become angry and will not tolerate it. He will kill Virata, together with his advisers, his army and his vehicles.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Prithivinjaya, the eldest son of the king, then entered. He showed obeisance at his father’s feet and then saw Dharmaraja. He was seated alone on the floor at one end, distracted, and smeared with blood. Sairandhri¹¹ attended to him. Quickly, Uttara asked his father, “O king! Who has struck him? Who has perpetrated this evil act?” Virata replied, “I have struck this wretch and he deserves more than this. When I praised your bravery, he praised the eunuch.” Uttara said, “O king! You have done that which should not have been done. Swiftly ask for his pardon. Otherwise, this brahmana’s terrible poison will burn you down, right down to the roots.” Having heard his son’s words, Virata, the extender of the kingdom, sought the forgiveness of Kounteya, who was like a fire hidden behind ashes. Pandava told the king, who was begging his pardon, “O king! I have already forgiven you. There is no anger left in me. O great king! If that blood from my nose had fallen down on the ground, there is no doubt that you would have been destroyed, together with your kingdom.”¹² O king! I do not blame you for striking one who had committed no crime. O great king! One who is powerful is always prone to quickly perform terrible acts.” When the bleeding had stopped, Brihannada entered. He saluted Virata and Kanka and remained standing.

‘After seeking Kouravya’s pardon, Matsya began to praise Uttara, who had returned from the field of battle, in Savyasachi’s hearing. “O one who extends Kaikeyi’s joy!¹³ I have truly obtained an heir in you. I do not have, nor will there be, sons who are your equal. O son! How was your encounter with Karna? He does not miss a step when he takes a thousand steps. O son! How was your encounter with Bhishma? There is no one equal to him in the world of men. He is as calm as the ocean and as unbearable as the fire of destruction. The brahmana¹⁴ is the preceptor of the warriors among the Vrishnis¹⁵ and the Pandavas. He is the preceptor of all the kshatriyas and is supreme among all wielders of arms. O son! How was your encounter with Drona? The brave son of the preceptor is supreme among those who have knowledge of all weapons. He is famous as Ashvatthama. How was your encounter with him? On seeing Kripa in battle, people are distressed, like traders whose goods have been lost. O son! How was your

encounter with him? Prince Duryodhana has shattered mountains with his great arrows. O son! How was your encounter with him?”

‘Uttara replied, “The cattle have not been won back by me. Nor have I vanquished the enemies. All those deeds have been accomplished by the son of a god. On seeing me run away in fear, that young son of a god restrained me. He is like the one with the vajra in his hand¹⁶ and ascended my chariot. He has won back the cattle and he has vanquished the Kurus. O father! All these brave deeds are his. They have not been accomplished by me. He released arrows and repulsed Sharadvat’s son,¹⁷ Drona, Drona’s valorous son, the son of the suta¹⁸ and Bhishma. Like the leader of a herd of elephants, he shattered Duryodhana in the battle and told that immensely strong and frightened prince, ‘I do not see any escape for you in Hastinapura. O son of a Kourava! Save your life through endeavour. O king! You will not be able to save your life by running away. Make up your mind to fight. If you win, you will enjoy the earth. And if you are killed, you will enjoy heaven.’ That tiger among men then returned and discharged arrows that were like the vajra. Surrounded by his advisers, the king stood on his chariot, like a hissing serpent. On seeing this, my body hair stood up. O revered one! My thighs began to tremble. But he struck that army, which was like a mass of clouds, with his arrows. That young one was like a lion and repulsed that army of chariots. O king! He laughed and stripped the Kurus of their garments. Alone, that brave one surrounded the six charioteers, like an angry tiger amidst deer roaming in the forest.”

‘Virata asked, “Where is that brave and mighty-armed one, the immensely famous son of a god? He is the one who has won back my riches, which had been conquered by the Kurus in battle. I wish to see that immensely strong one and show him homage. That son of a god has protected you and my cattle.”

‘Uttara said, “O father! The powerful son of a god disappeared. But I think that he will reappear tomorrow, or the day after.””

Vaishampayana said, ‘While this was being described, Pandava¹⁹ remained concealed in his disguise. Virata did not know that Partha Arjuna was residing there. Having obtained the great-souled Virata’s permission,

Partha himself gave those garments to Virata's daughter. They were extremely expensive and fine and the beautiful Uttara happily accepted those garments. O king! Kounteya then secretly devised a plan with Uttara,²⁰ about everything that should be done vis-à-vis Yudhishtira. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Together with Matsya's son, the bull among men cheerfully carried this out.'

661(65)

Vaishampayana said, 'On the third day, the five Pandava brothers bathed themselves and donned white garments, having completed the pledge that they had made.²¹ Adorning themselves in ornaments, and with Yudhishtira at the forefront, the maharathas were as resplendent as elephants marked with the signs of the lotus.²² They went to Virata's assembly hall and seated themselves on thrones meant for lords of the earth. They were as radiant as fires on sacrificial altars. While they were seated there, Virata, lord of the earth, arrived at the assembly hall to perform all his royal duties. On seeing the handsome Pandavas, blazing like fires, with Kanka seated there in the form of a god, like the lord of the thirty gods attended by the Maruts, Matsya told him, "I put you in charge of the dice and appointed you the official gamester. Why are you ornamented and why are you seated on the royal throne?"

'O king! On hearing Virata's words, Arjuna laughed and spoke the following words. "O king! This one deserves to be seated on Indra's throne. He has the qualities of a brahmana. He is learned in the sacred texts. He is generous. He is the performer of sacrifices. He is rigid in his vows. He is a bull among the Kurus. He is Kunti's son, Yudhishtira. His deeds are established on this earth, like the rays of the rising sun. O king! When he dwelt in the land of the Kurus, ten thousand powerful elephants used to follow him at the back. Thirty thousand chariots and well-trained and handsome horses, with golden harnesses, always used to follow him from behind. There were eight hundred bards, with earrings studded with polished gems, together with minstrels chanting his praises, like rishis

praising Shakra earlier. O king! Like the immortals wait on the lord of riches,²³ the Kurus, and all the kings, waited on him, like servants. O great king! All the lords of the earth offered him tribute then, like ordinary vaishyas. The king was excellent in his vows and eighty-eight thousand great-souled *snatakas*²⁴ earned their living off him. O lord! In accordance with dharma, he protected his subjects like sons, the aged, the unprotected, the disabled and the crippled. Such was his dharma, his self-control over anger and his carefulness in observing vows. He was extremely generous. He had the qualities of a brahmana. The lord of the earth was always truthful. The lord Suyodhana was tormented because of his prosperity and his power, together with his followers, Karna, Soubala and the others. O lord of men! It is impossible to recount all his qualities. These are vested in the great king Pandava, bull among the lords of the earth. Does such a king not deserve a seat that is meant for a lord of the earth?”

662(66)

‘Virata said, “If this is King Kouravya Yudhishtira, the son of Kunti, where is his brother Arjuna? Where is the powerful Bhima? Where are Nakula, Sahadeva and the famous Droupadi? From the time they were defeated in the gambling match, no one has got to know about the Parthas.”

‘Arjuna replied, “O lord of men! This cook of yours, known by the name of Ballava, is the mighty-armed Bhima, whose speed and valour are terrible. To fetch divine sougandhika flowers for Krishna, it is he who killed the demons on Mount Gandhamadana.²⁵ He is the gandharva who slew the evil-souled Kichaka.²⁶ It was he who slew tigers, bears and boars in your women’s quarters. The one who tends to your horses is Nakula, the scorcher of enemies. The one who looks after your cattle is Sahadeva, the other one of Madri’s maharatha sons. These two bulls among men are capable of withstanding thousands of warriors and are handsome and famous. They now wear the garments and ornaments of love.²⁷ O king! This lotus-eyed, slender-waisted and sweet-smiling sairandhri is Droupadi.

It is because of her that the Kichakas were killed. O great king! I am Arjuna and you have no doubt heard about me. I am Partha, the younger brother of Bhima and elder to the two twins. O great king! We have happily spent our period of concealment in your abode, like beings inside a womb.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘When Arjuna had revealed the five brave Pandavas, Virata’s son recounted Arjuna’s valour. “This is the one who was like a lion among deer in the midst of the enemies. He ranged among the mass of charioteers and killed the best of them. With a single arrow, he pierced and killed a giant elephant in the battle. Adorned with a golden harness, it fell down, embedding its tusks on the ground. It is he who won back the cattle and defeated the Kurus in battle. It is the sound of his conch shell that deafened my ears.” On hearing these words, the powerful king of Matsya, who had insulted Yudhishtira, told Uttara, “I think the time has come to seek the favour of the Pandavas. If you so think, I will bestow Uttara on Partha.”²⁸ Uttara replied, “They deserve worship, homage and honour and I think that the time has come. Let the immensely fortunate Pandavas, who are deserving of honour, be honoured.” Virata said, “When I myself came under the power of enemies in the field of battle, it was Bhimasena who rescued me and won back the cattle.²⁹ It is through the valour of their arms that we have been victorious in battle. With all our advisers, let us seek the favours of Kunti’s son, Yudhishtira, bull among the Pandavas, and his younger brothers. Let the fortunate lord among men forgive everything that we have said in ignorance. Pandava has dharma in his soul.” Virata was extremely delighted and he made an alliance with the king. He offered the great-souled one his entire kingdom, together with the royal staff, the treasury and the capital.

‘Then addressing all the Pandavas, with Dhananjaya at the forefront, the powerful king of the Matsyas repeatedly kept on saying that he was fortunate. He repeatedly embraced and inhaled the fragrance of the heads³⁰ of Yudhishtira, Bhima, Madri’s two sons and Pandava.³¹ Virata, lord of an army, was not satisfied from looking at them. He happily told King Yudhishtira, “It is through good fortune that all of you have

returned safely from the forest. It is through good fortune that you have spent the period of concealment, undetected by those evil-souled ones.³² I am offering this kingdom, and whatever else I possess, to the Parthas. May the Kounteyas accept everything, without any hesitation. Let Savyasachi Dhananjaya accept Uttara. That supreme among men is the right husband for her.” Thus addressed, Dharmaraja glanced towards Partha Dhananjaya. When his brother looked at him, Arjuna spoke these words to Matsya. “O king! I will accept your daughter as my daughter-in-law. Such an alliance between supreme Matsyas and Bharatas will be proper.”

663(67)

‘Virata asked, “O best of the Pandavas! Why do you refuse to accept my daughter as your wife? Accept her. I am offering her to you.”

‘Arjuna replied, ‘Dwelling in your inner quarters, I always observed your daughter. Whether in private or in public, she always trusted me as her father. I was loved by her and respected because of my skills in dancing and singing. Your daughter has always thought of me as her teacher. O king! I lived for a year with a woman who is nubile. O lord! Suspicion on your part, or that of your subjects, is not misplaced. O lord of the earth! Therefore, I am asking for your daughter. I have been pure and have been in control of my senses. Because of my self-control, she has been kept pure. There is no difference between a daughter and a daughter-in-law, nor that between a son and one’s own self. I do not see any misdemeanour in this and purity will be preserved. O scorcher of enemies! I am terrified of curses and false accusations. O king! That is the reason I will accept your daughter Uttara as my daughter-in-law. O lord of the earth! My mighty-armed son Abhimanyu is Vasudeva’s nephew.³³ He is just like a child of the gods. He is learned in all weapons and is loved by the one who wields the *chakra*.³⁴ He is the right son-in-law for you and a husband for your daughter.”

‘Virata said, “This is indeed appropriate for Kunti’s son, Dhananjaya, the best of the Kurus. Pandava is learned and wise and always follows

dharma. O Partha!³⁵ What do you think should be done after this? If one has an alliance with Arjuna, all one's desires are completely satisfied.”

Vaishampayana said, ‘When the Indra among kings said this, Kunti’s son, Yudhishtira, gave his consent to the alliance between Matsya and Partha. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Virata, lord of the earth, and Kounteya³⁶ sent messengers to all their friends and Vasudeva. Thus, after the thirteen years were over, all the five Pandavas began to live in Virata’s Upaplavya.³⁷ Bibhatsu Pandava went to bring Janardana, Abhimanyu and the other Dasharhas from the Anarta region.³⁸ O lord of the earth! The kings of Kashi and Shaibya, who were affectionate towards Yudhishtira, arrived with two *akshouhinis*.³⁹ The immensely strong and powerful Yajnasena⁴⁰ arrived with one akshouhini, and Droupadi’s brave sons and the unvanquished Shikhandi. There was the invincible Dhrishtadyumna, supreme among those who wield all weapons. There were others with many akshouhinis, those who sacrificed with a lot of donations. All of them were learned in the use of weapons and all of them were brave and were ready to give up their lives.⁴¹ Matsya, supreme among those who uphold dharma, was happy at seeing that they had come. He was happy that he had bestowed his daughter on Abhimanyu. After the lords of the earth had arrived from different directions, Vasudeva Vanamali arrived, and so did the wielder of the plough.⁴² Hardikya Kritavarma, Yuyudhana Satyaki, Anadhrishti, Akrura, Samba and Nishatha arrived.⁴³ Those scorchers of enemies brought Abhimanyu and his mother with them. Indrasena⁴⁴ and the others arrived there, taking good care of the chariots, having remained away for one entire year. Ten thousand elephants arrived and one million horses. There were a full one hundred million chariots and one billion foot soldiers. There were many supremely energetic Vrishnis, Andhakas and Bhojas. They followed that tiger among the Vrishnis, the greatly resplendent Vasudeva. Krishna separately gave each of the great-souled Pandavas a collection of women, gems and garments.

‘In accordance with the rites, the marriage between the Matsyas and the Parthas took place. Conch shells, kettle drums, trumpets and drums were

assembled and played in Matsya's palace, honoured by the Parthas. Many hundreds of diverse deer and other animals were slain. Liquor and other celestial drinks were brought in large quantities. There were many skilled singers and raconteurs, dancers and minstrels. The assembled bards, together with the minstrels, began to chant praises. With Sudeshna leading the way, the supreme women from the Matsyas arrived. All of them were beautiful in their limbs and wore earrings that were studded with excellent gems. They were well complexioned, noble, beautiful and ornamented. But Krishna surpassed them in beauty, fame and prosperity. They surrounded the ornamented Princess Uttara and honoured her, as if she was a daughter of the great Indra. Dhananjaya Kounteya accepted Virata's unblemished daughter for his and Subhadra's son. Kunti's son, the great king Yudhishtira, stood there, equal in beauty to Indra, and accepted her as his daughter-in-law. When Partha had accepted her and honoured Janardana, the wedding ceremony of Subhadra's great-souled son was performed. He gave him⁴⁵ seven thousand horses that possessed the speed of the wind, two hundred supreme elephants and a great deal of riches. Once the marriage was over, Dharma's son, Yudhishtira, gave the brahmanas the riches that Achyuta⁴⁶ had brought—thousands of cows, gems, diverse kinds of garments, excellent ornaments, vehicles and beds. There were great festivities. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The city of the king of Matsyas was resplendent and crowded with people who were happy and well fed.'

This ends Virata Parva.